

# THE LEHIGH REVIEW



*A Student Journal of the Liberal Arts*

VOLUME THREE

SPRING 1995

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Each year, Lehigh University publishes *The Lehigh Review*, a student journal of the liberal arts. Every issue contains some of the best writing by Lehigh students.

Any scholarly articles, creative essays, or book reviews may be submitted. The Review does not ordinarily accept fiction or poetry.

All submissions should reflect the breadth and depth of the liberal arts. We are especially interested in submissions that draw from the content or methodology of more than one discipline. The Review expects students to submit well-researched work that exceeds mere reflection or synthesis of existing sources. Submissions should demonstrate imagination, original insight, and mastery of the subject.

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## "Step Right Up and Take a Chance"

With the third volume of the *Lehigh Review* we again reprint an essay from the original 1931-1941 run of the journal. What is going on here is what social scientists refer to as the "invention of tradition." But the practice of recycling old articles, thus maintaining a link between present and past, is a tradition we by no means feel obliged to honor in the future. As was the case last year, Edwin Klein '42, is the author of the republished work, and his "Fireman's Carnival," is a memoir of the summer he worked for Colonel Sickler's Mighty Monarch Expositions. To match it in raw depravity, we also offer a piece for the '90s, Jonathan Place's "Blissful Degregation."

Speaking of the sordid carney life, publication of this year's volume of the journal was only coincidentally delayed until January — we didn't do it to build side-show tension so the anxious rubes would shell out more to get hold of a copy. Honest. Mostly, the delay came at the outset of our editorial work, when Lehigh's diffident students were reluctant to submit their work to the savage editorial process by which papers come to be included. It was only after a second call for papers that the entries poured in, eventually nearly fifty, and the editorial work could go forward.

The point here is simply that students now reading this volume of the journal should start thinking about that interesting term paper they did recently, the one that is perfect for the *Lehigh Review* or the one that could, with minimal revision, be transformed into a submission. We are now accepting papers for the fourth volume of the Review and will continue to do so until the start of spring break (March 11, 1995). In fact, a couple of papers have already come in.

This year's volume features the usual diverse selection of some of the best student writing in the arts and sciences. The subjects embraced range from history ("A Study of Philadelphia's Industrial Power," "Martin and Malcolm") to contemporary aesthetic theory ("Patriarchy and the Female Sublime," "An Investigation as to the Character of Minimalist Art"), and from criticism, both literary and social ("Kesey and Queffelec," "Can Socialism and Feminism be Reconciled?") to philosophy ("Sartre's *Nausea*"). On the basis of the early submissions, we can report that the next volume of the Review promises to be even more diverse than this one — some heavy hitters among the natural scientists have begun to weigh in. We applaud this and encourage other students of the natural sciences to sub-



mit their writing.

We are happy to report that this year we chose as the winners of the Williams Essay Prize competition: James Versocki, Pat Horan, Eva Pankenier, and Christopher Girr.

As has been the case in the past, it is through the generous financial support of Dr. Patti Ota and the Provost's Office and Dean James Gunton and interim Dean W. Beall Fowler of the College of Arts and Science that the Lehigh Review can be published. We would like to thank them for their continuing support. We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Scott Fritzinger, the graphic designer who did the layout.

Faculty Steering Committee  
*December 1994*

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\* Williams Essay Prize winner



## Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X: Converging Ideas with Solid Philosophies

*James Versocki*

Examining the lives of two great civil rights leaders, whether they be Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. DuBois, or Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, provides us with insight into their views and goals for the civil rights movement and the roles that they individually played in that movement. A successful leader must take a stand, or set goals for himself. Both Malcolm X and Dr. King sought “the unqualified liberation of Afro-Americans from the bonds of segregation and discrimination to self-determination as a people, from a feeling of inferiority and nobodiness to an affirmation of themselves as human beings” (Cone, 1992, p. 246). Though the ultimate goal of these two men may have been the “unqualified liberation of Afro-Americans,” their strategies and tactics differed greatly.

As years of toil and experience molded and shaped both Dr. King and Malcolm X, they began to re-examine their strategies and goals, and these examinations caused the ultimate convergence of some of their ideas. Intelligence allows one to reform and learn, and both of these men had great intellects. Their lives and experiences dealing with the harsh realities of racism forced the two leaders to transform some of their strategies for the uplifting of the black community in America. After the Selma March for Dr. King, and after a Hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca for Malcolm X, the two men began to embrace new ideas for the advancement of the civil rights movement, and in many instances, their new ideas converged with the ideas of the other.

I wish to make it clear that even though they accepted new ideas later in their careers, the two men still remained loyal to their original philosophies, of self-defense for Malcolm X and non-violence for Dr. King. These concepts remained embedded in each man’s philosophy for Afro-Americans, and this point must not be overlooked. Even so, new ideas and open-mindedness helped each man’s “path to the goal” to “complement that of the other” (Cone, 1992, p. 246) and ultimately build a stronger civil rights movement.

Contributing to the political enfranchisement of Afro-Americans were Dr. King’s and Malcolm X’s efforts to make blacks realize that power within a political institution allows for positive changes to be made. As we shall see, Dr. King and Malcolm X usually held strong beliefs on particular points which the other later learned to appreciate or embrace. Dr. King had long believed that “what is needed [for Afro-Americans] is a strategy for change, a tactical program that will bring the Negro into the mainstream of society as quickly as possible” (King, 1967, p.



59). His strategy to accomplish this goal lay in messages such as this: “the only answer to the delay, double dealing, tokenism and racism that we still confront is through mass non-violent action and the ballot” (King, 1967, p. 129). Dr. King’s message here was that for Afro-Americans to change their situation, they must do it politically, and the best way politically was to use the right of the “ballot”—to vote.

Malcolm X’s political ideology began to conform to Dr. King’s after his pilgrimage to Mecca when he founded the Muslim Mosque, Inc., to “provide for the active participation of all Negroes in our political, economic, and social programmes” (White, 1985, p. 155). His realization that an effective Afro-American political movement could have great influence culminated in his founding of the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU). One of the main objectives of this new organization was, “a voter-registration drive to make every unregistered voter in the Afro-American community an independent voter” (White, 1985, p. 156). Malcolm X began to envision an Afro-American voting block which could effectively dictate its wants and needs through the right to vote; therefore, one of his strategies began to converge with one of Dr. King’s.

Separation of blacks from mainstream America was a key point that Malcolm X continually supported throughout his active civil rights career. One of his goals of separation was to build a community where black money would stay in the community and help build black financial stability. Afro-Americans in slums watched their money leave their community quicker than they made it, and Malcolm X was determined to end that destructive cycle. Dr. King also recognized this dilemma and began to propose dramatic changes, for “a fundamental redistribution of wealth and economic power” within the American economic system (White, 1985, p. 137). Each man realized the power of money and the influence that the Afro-American community could gain, as Dr. King states, from “the other economic lever available to the Negro...as a consumer” (White, 1985, p. 137). The notion that “temporary segregation was the only means of overcoming powerlessness in the black community” therefore became a thesis for black empowerment that these two leaders shared (Cone 1992,256).

Influential throughout Malcolm X’s career was his focus on black culture and black pride. His work in the ghettos and slums of America focused on a revitalization of black spirit, which he saw as integral for any civil rights movement to succeed. Similar to Marcus Garvey’s “Black is Beautiful” theme, Malcolm X said that, “Physically we Afro-Americans might remain in America, fighting for our Constitutional rights, but that philosophically and culturally we Afro-Americans badly needed to ‘return’ to Africa—and to develop a working unity in the framework of Pan-Africanism” (Haley, 1964, p. 350). Pan-Africanism for Malcolm X would culminate in a defined and distinctive culture, spirituality, and pride for Afro-Americans that would uplift his people to recognize that they were equal to all others. His OAAU was to fight for “the establishment of a cultural centre in



Harlem to offer courses and workshops in the arts and in Afro-American history, and Afro-American principles for black schools" (White, 1985, pp. 156-57).

Dr. King's ideas of Pan-Africanism began to develop when he "saw the depth of self-hate and despair among blacks in the urban ghettos" and "he began to speak strongly in support of black self-esteem" (Cone, 1992, p. 292). Dr. King's ideas began to converge with Malcolm X's after he saw the degradation of the black community in the North. This can be attributed to the fact that Malcolm X grew up in the ghettos of the North while Dr. King came from a middle-class family. Only after his initial years in the civil rights movement did Dr. King begin to fathom the deeper problems of the black community and address them; he then "began to urge blacks to be proud of their "blackness", a word he almost never used publicly before he turned his attention to the North" (Cone, 1992, p. 256). Pan-Africanism and Afro-American culture were integral parts of Malcolm X's message that Dr. King later embraced, which proves further convergences in their ideas and strategies.

Cone states that "besides Malcolm's and Martin's accent on politics and culture, their internationalism was their most important contribution to the African-American struggle for freedom in the United States" (p. 314). This "internationalism" arose much later in each man's life and may have been their most similar view. Dr. King's focus centered on his deep-rooted opposition to the Vietnam War and his fight against poverty. Malcolm X, meanwhile, centered on attempts for a united dark skinned peoples alliance against worldwide imperialistic oppression. Dr. King's internationalism saw a lack of justice as the most damaging: "Injustice anywhere", he constantly reminded us, "is a threat to justice everywhere" (Cone, 1992, p. 294). Malcolm X's message was quite similar when he stated, "We are today seeing a global rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor, the exploited against the exploiter" (Cone, 1992, p. 294). Each man saw the world-wide problems confronting black people and addressed the issue in a way that complemented each other. Dr. King opposed injustices against blacks, or any peoples, while Malcolm X focused on united world efforts that could be made to improve the race situation. Even so, Malcolm X was still specifically critical of the American system as evidenced when he stated, "the first thing the American power structure doesn't want any Negroes to start is thinking internationally. I think the single worst mistake of the American black organizations, and their leaders, is that they have failed to establish direct brotherhood lines of communication between the independent nations of Africa and the American black people" (Haley, 1964, p. 346). Later in their lives, these two men began to construct these lines of communication through Pan-Africanism.

The visions of freedom for the African-American which Dr. King and Malcolm X both saw were not only beautiful, but often very similar. It seems that as time passed, each man began to mature and with an open mind accept new thoughts and ideas which molded their speeches and outlooks. A new Malcolm X said,



"You may be shocked by these words coming from me. But on this pilgrimage, what I have seen, and experienced, has forced me to re-arrange much of my thought-patterns previously held, and to toss aside some of my previous conclusions" (Haley, 1964, p. 340). One main change was that Malcolm X began to accept the help of non-blacks in his movement, a notion that he would never have previously considered. At the same time, Dr. King "was also re-evaluating his presuppositions and was moving toward a greater understanding of Malcolm X, especially regarding black pride, separatism, and white America's lack of commitment to genuine black equality" (Cone, 1992, p. 256). A convergence of ideas between the two leaders was without a doubt occurring, but their philosophies still differed on the issues of non-violence and self-defense.

Dr. King's non-violence and Malcolm X's self-defense were still, and always remained, the cornerstones of each man's strategies for the "unqualified liberation of the Afro-American" (Cone, 1992, p. 246). For Dr. King, "Freedom [was] not won by a passive acceptance of suffering. Freedom [was] won by a struggle against suffering" (King, 1967, p. 20), and he meant to win that freedom through non-violent protest. Malcolm X was "for violence if non-violence means we continue postponing a solution to the American black man's problem — just to avoid violence. I don't go for non-violence if it also means a delayed solution. To me a delayed solution is a non-solution" (Haley, 1964, p. 367). Although it is clear that on specific issues, such as political and economic power, Pan-Africanism and internationalism, Dr. King and Malcolm X were beginning to embrace similar ideals, views, strategies, and even tactics, the two men never could reconcile their differences on self-defense versus non-violence. It was this difference that kept them a world apart when their ultimate goal was the same.

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## Fireman's Carnival

Edwin H. Klein '42

Reprinted from the *Lehigh Review*, October 1939

My father came home late on Sunday evening, walking out into the kitchen to investigate the reason for burning an electric light at this hour of the night. He stopped dead on the threshold of the room. I saw his stricken face and got up from the table hurriedly and introduced Andre. Both of us were more than grimy after the weekend "teardown." He called me aside and told me to get that cleaned up before my mother came home to suffer the same shock as he had. In a rather uncertain tone he also told me to get myself and Andre cleaned up so that we could both go over and explain ourselves to the neighbors before they tried to do their own explaining.

I don't think my parents had ever been too keen on my joining up with Colonel Sickler's Mighty Monarch Expositions. (That isn't the real name but it follows as closely as possible the mellifluous flow of the original triumph of adjectives.) But when Andre showed up at the neighborhood lawn party, he did a supreme job of pouring oil on the troubled waters. He had black, wavy hair, with little gray feathers at the temples. For the rest, he had an aquiline nose and a flashing smile, heritages probably of his Gallic mother. Andre had a brilliant, winning way with the Hoosiers, which was his name for the local yokels. It is a rather common talent with the carnival crowd, undoubtedly picked up from the life of travel and flavored with the cocky attitude you get from outsmarting herds of Reubens every day of the week.

In a matter of minutes, Andre had fascinated the whole bunch of them. In a matter of a few more minutes, the family, the neighbors and Andre were old friends. Andre was operating a grocery "pitch," a familiar sight around the fireman's carnival we were working. Entirely unknown to Andre, of course, the wheel had a "gaff," or a "gimmick" on it. This little gadget gave Andre the unusual power of being able to stop the wheel just about anywhere he wanted it to. He could almost make it back up. That week Dad had the "lucky" number on two baskets of groceries, and by some curious twist of fortune, the mayor and the fire chief's wife also "won" a basket of groceries. Andre was very gifted at making friends.

Colonel Sickler's Mighty Monarch Exposition was a pretty threadbare outfit. It was what the trade calls a "ragshow," their term for a seedy carnival with poor canvas. I found out about the canvas after the first storm, when most of the canvas tops let go of their seams. But Colonel Sickler was a mighty resourceful man and those little details bothered neither him nor me. He was too experienced with



the game and the vicissitudes of life, and I was only sixteen at the time and only too willing to overlook such trifling deficiencies.

I spent two summers with the Colonel's mighty show. Two turbulent and interesting summers. There is something fascinating about the traveling carnival. There is something about its very tinsel and tawdriness that creeps into your life and holds fast until the very end. The oldtimers say that once you get the smell of canvas and the glitter of spangles inside you, spring just can't roll around without bringing with it the irresistible urge to hit the road.

Frankie and I went to work at the same time. I don't know who had the idea first. Frankie's father was a partner in a third-rate theatrical booking agency and it was through him that we got our jobs with the show. After that title, almost any show would have been a let down to us. Even Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey. But that first feeling was a short one, because it isn't ten minutes before you're good friends with anybody and everybody in a traveling carnival. It did seem to us that here was the world's prize assortment of unusual individuals.

Colonel Sickler himself was nothing you'd find in a suburban living room. He was a paunchy little fellow, but he carried his weight well. His eyes had a sort of watery blue innocence that was only deceiving. Under them were wrinkled little bags of plain dissipation. He had an accent that was only two minute's drive from Tenth Avenue. Right away he showed a unique personal interest in Frankie and me. He called us "his boys." But Frankie was a realist and he said that the Colonel's Mighty Monarch Expositions was headed for the rocks and that if Frankie's father could be induced to buy a share, the eventual collapse might be considerably postponed.

It might be noted here that a carnival's source of income is not all legitimate. This I say with a full feeling of respect for the carnival. Fleecing the rubes we had to deal with was a profession that required a great deal of ingenuity and skill. For our course in working on the chumps, which is the common term for the public, we registered for a short period of instruction under professor Slug Bullitt, who had his doctor's in working the "camels," the "creepers" and the "bird cages" — in fact, almost any pitch joint that never gave a sucker an even break. Slug also had numerous other idiosyncrasies. Here was a man who, at fifty, was probably twice as much of a scoundrel as he was when he was twenty-five. He had the moral code of an alley cat and told us both confidentially that water never touched his face except when he shaved, which was once a week. We had a hunch that water touched his lips less often than that. He also informed us that his girl was so ugly that no other man could look at her. Both strange and inspiring were his tales of prowess in l'amour. I never took him home. But he soon taught us all the tricks of the trade, one in which the winning number is only a matter of elimination — the number with no money on it.

But the carnival group was as varied as each of its members. Andre and Karl, for instance, were forever arguing about the capabilities and shortcomings of



Tibbett, Melchior, Martinelli, and Martini. Tibbett was the most popular with the masses of opera-goers, but ha! Melchior was the more polished performer. Martinelli had a good voice, perhaps, but he couldn't project himself into a role. Martini's voice was sweet but it never had any real quality. I bowed under their decisions. Karl was a stage carpenter at the Metropolitan, and Andre's brother had been a member of the now extinct American Opera Company. I don't know whose opinions were the more authentic. Karl was with the carnival now because thirty years ago he had worked for the Colonel's aunt and had never been able to break himself of the carnival habit. Andre was with the show because, after all, it was still the show business.

Andre was the black sheep of an old Southern family. Like his Gallic face, he had inherited a love for the theater from his mother, who had been a French actress and singer. I felt more than a little sorry for him at times. He was only thirty and he was going down hill plenty fast already. I had to acknowledge the fact that the Mighty Monarch Expositions was not at the top of the show business. It was just a plain old third-rate ragshow, and it looked pretty shabby every now and then when I looked at it without the sentiment that goes with it.

Andre had been educated in a good Catholic school. He graduated from Georgetown at eighteen. This much I got out of him. He had been a topflight adagio dancer, a bank employee (this probably was the most miserable part of his life), a booking agent, a bit player in the movies, a movie publicity writer, a song writer, a staff writer on a theatrical paper, a burlesque show manager, and finally down on the rocks with the Mighty Monarch Expositions. I wondered if such a colorful career was worth being in the carnival at the age of thirty with no brilliant prospect for the future. He had been married four times and had a thirteen-year old boy in an exclusive Virginia military academy. He didn't really have to worry about making money, because he got his periodical remittance check from his family. It was more than enough to take care of his expenses. We became such great friends, he and I, that I invited him to our house for the week and caused the shock to my father already described.

And there was an old Italian there who had been rigger for the great Alfred Codona, who was about tops in the aerial profession. Codona had about as much respect in his profession as Bobby Jones in golf or Red Grange in football. He was the greatest aerialist that ever lived. And this rigger told us that Codona treated him with as much respect as he himself got from his audiences, for he knew that his life depended more on the rigger than any one else. I took his word for that.

In a carnival, a shooting gallery is a "lead-joint" and ours was run by an old animal trainer who had lost his nerve and wouldn't admit it. When you lose your nerve inside the cages you just never go back in. A lion-tamer without any guts is like a deep-sea diver with a helmet. He never talked about it now. The carnival was full of "ex's." Peanuts was an old-time vaudeville comedian. The chief mechanic claimed that he was an army pilot. He wouldn't say why he quit the ser-



vice but he habitually wore breeches and riding boots as if he were always ready to hop in his plane and go off to defend the country from an invader. Swede had been an elephant trainer with Barnum and Bailey until he got drunk one night and passed out in the elephant tent. One of the big tuskers stepped on him and he's a hunchback now. It seemed that everybody in the outfit had a vivid past. We never bothered to check up on them because we were satisfied to believe them.

Just about the most unusual character in the whole outfit was our Indian princess snake charmer who was an Irishman, a long way from royalty. His stock in trade consisted of a bunch of defanged rattlers and some harmless black snakes and pine snakes. The "princess" had cultivated a little trick of eating a chicken alive and raw. It was successful in adding some spice to the program. It can be mastered by anyone with a strong stomach and will power. But the "princess" was no match for New Jersey. The unfortunate man was confined in bed for a full week from blood-poisoning brought about by the bites of the ravenous Jersey mosquitoes which often grow large enough to carry away a young sheep.

The Mighty Monarch Expositions played chiefly in New Jersey and had no end of difficulty with the state police. The colonel just considered the state police very unbusiness-like and studiously avoided them. But twice I've seen them come on the lot and smash one or two dozen mechanical diggers. A digger is worth somewhere around three hundred dollars and the ex-high diver who had invested in them lost about six thousand dollars of his investment before the cops were through with their axes and sledges. The digger as it is operated is a sort of competition between the operator and the public or the "chumps." The digger is a mechanical crane that looks as if it is going to pick up that camera and doesn't. When money is put in it, the digger is fixed to pay out on Monday nights and gets more selfish as the week wears on. The public tried to beat the operator with the amateurish trick of using slugs. About ten per cent of the take in a night is made up of buttons, washers, and miscellaneous substitutes for nickels.

Most of the heavy players, the wise boys in the community, think they have just the system that's going to beat the pitchman. Usually they are anywhere from ten or twenty steps behind a reasonably smart operator. One Reuben in particular had a system that looked almost unbeatable. By doubling each preceding bet he figured he was going to clean out the whole concern. He was playing a three dice game called chuck-a-luck. When he had lost a hundred and twenty dollars, he started to kick. He set up such a howl that it almost started a riot and took a policeman to escort him off the lot.

Carnival folks may be charlatans and petty crooks but they aren't all bad. They are notoriously soft-hearted and nearly every week somebody is taking up a collection for some poor, broken-down vaudevillian or some aerial artist when the law of averages catches up with him. They are an extremely optimistic lot — looking backward to the days when they were cleaning two or three hundred dollars a week from a single pitch or looking forward to the day when the traveling car-



nival will hit its stride again. You never hear them complain, either, if they don't make a dime for three weeks in a row. They gamble on the weather; the public thinks they're gambling but they're really not.



## Love's density and the journey towards self in Tony Morrison's *Beloved*

Elizabeth Olsen

*Children of the future age,  
Reading this indignant page,  
Know that in a former time,  
Love, sweet love, was thought a crime.*  
– Robert Blake, *A Little Girl Lost*

*"Love is or it ain't. Thin love ain't love at all."*  
– *Beloved*, 64

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is a journey through both thick and thin love. In the hands of Sethe, love could wax so thick it could truly become criminal, and, within the shackles of slavery, love was so thin that it became a crime of another sort. *Beloved* is also Sethe's journey towards self. Slavery's scarcity of compassion denied her an identity. In the thickness of passion, where love-crimes abound, she was solely a little girl lost. In the end, for Sethe, the love that "is" became the love of self.

In *The Crime of Innocence in the Fiction of Toni Morrison*, Terry Otten explains how slave owners attempted to subvert familial and other communal bonds among slaves for fear that such camaraderie might interfere with productivity. Otten states, "The moral authority of *Beloved* resides less in a revelation of the obvious horrors of slavery than in a revelation of slavery's nefarious ability to invert moral categories and behavior and to impose tragic choice" (82-3). The "tragic choice" Otten refers to here was Sethe's decision to murder her children and herself rather than have them all returned to slavery. For Sethe, death was preferable to the slave condition in which her family would most certainly be separated. Experience had taught Sethe that there was no such thing as the "slave family."

The myth of the slave family is addressed early in *Beloved*'s unfolding. Both Sethe and her mother-in-law, Baby Suggs, had already endured the nomadic aspects of slave life where mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers were bought and sold so frequently that such familial titles bore no relevance:

It made sense for a lot of reasons because in all of Baby's life, as well as Sethe's own, men and women were moved around like checkers. Anybody Baby Suggs knew, let alone loved, who hadn't run off or been hanged, got



rented out, loaned out, bought up, brought back, stored up, mortgaged, won, stolen or seized. So Baby's eight children had six fathers. What she called the nastiness of life was the shock she received upon learning that nobody stopped playing checkers just because the pieces were her children. (23)

Baby Suggs never had the opportunity to know her eight children, except for the youngest, Halle, Sethe's husband. Consequently, Baby Suggs frequently reminded her daughter-in-law that she was lucky to know her own children. "'Be thankful, why don't you?' Baby Suggs would tell Sethe, 'I had eight, every one of them gone away from me ... My first-born, all I can remember of her is how she loved the burned bottom of bread. Can you beat that? Eight children and that's all I remember'" (5). Because of the nature of the slave society, Sethe certainly was "fortunate enough to know her children." Still, Sethe's good fortune was not solely a stroke of luck; keeping her family together required pain and sacrifice. Her determination to keep her family intact was fueled by Sethe's own vague memories of the mother she hardly knew.

These vague memories of her own mother were often stirred while Sethe was also recollecting events in her own life as a mother. One of Sethe's earliest memories consisted of an eight-year-old slave-girl's pointing Sethe's mother out to her, a memory evoked by her remembrance of the birth of her youngest daughter, Denver. This was the first time Sethe was given any idea of who her mother was, and she searched for a means to distinguish this stranger in her mind: "What she saw was a cloth hat as opposed to a straw one, singularity enough in the world of cooing women each of whom was called Ma'am" (30). Later, Sethe had an actual confrontation with this virtual stranger. Her mother pulled her behind a barn and loosened her dress to show her a mark that only she bore. She told her daughter, "'This is your ma'am. This,' and she pointed. 'I am the only one got this mark now. The rest dead. If something happens to me and you can't tell me by my face, you can know me by this mark'" (61). The two were strangers to each other, but the maternal bond proved ardent, as the mother found it necessary to assert her identity to her otherwise anonymous daughter. In this fleeting and covert meeting behind the barn, the subversion of the slave family was somewhat vanquished.

Albeit circumstance prevented Sethe from truly knowing her mother, she still learned a great lesson from this woman. From these scattered images of motherhood Sethe developed the belief that her own children would know their mother by more than just a mark.

Slavery redefined family. Sethe, from her own experiences and also by observing those of other slaves, such as Baby Suggs, acquired her own determination to have and to keep a family. For Sethe, as well as for most slaves, this desire for family was also a desire for identification, a means for asserting oneself. Slaves were denied the privilege of declaring, "I am a mother, a sister, a daughter," since



families were constantly separated. When a slave could assert some sort of familial connection, he/she had in some way triumphed over the system. Within the slave system, being a member of a family was also a means for identifying oneself separate from that system.

The pieces of "rememory" regarding her mother were Sethe's first familial experiences while she was still a slave. Her next were at Sweet Home where she first met her future husband, Halle, and her future lover, Paul D. At Sweet Home, Sethe was the only woman slave among five Sweet Home men. Still they respected her and treated her as a sister. The business of slavery was also to reproduce, but they even allowed her the honor of selecting her own mate:

They were young and so sick with the absence of women they had taken to calves. Yet they let the iron-eyed girl be, so she could choose in spite of the fact that each one would have beaten the others to mush to have her. It took her a year to choose—a long, tough year of thrashing on pallets eaten up with dreams of her. A year of yearning when rape seemed the solitary gift of life. (10)

Sethe did choose. She picked Halle, the boy who was willing to relinquish Saturdays and Sundays for his mother's freedom. When Paul D reunited with Sethe eighteen years after the Sweet Home experience, he reflected on Sethe's choice and considered Halle's maternal devotion as a possible reason for her selection: "Maybe that's why she chose him," he considered. "A twenty-year-old man so in love with his mother he gave up five years of Sabbaths just to see her sit down for a change was a serious recommendation" (11). Sethe, so passionate about family herself, naturally would be drawn to a man who considered motherhood with equal gravity. Later Sethe admitted this was a motivating factor, but, when Halle did not meet her in Ohio as planned, she proceeded to reevaluate her assessment: "Halle of course was the nicest. Baby Suggs' eighth and last child, who rented himself all over the country to buy her away from there. But he too, as it turned out, was nothing but a man" (23). Once Halle violated the familial code by deserting the family, he was demoted from father and husband to merely his gender, "nothing but a man." Likewise, Baby Suggs told Sethe that, "A man ain't nothing but a man. But a son? Well now, that's somebody" (23).

Sethe reacted similarly when her sons, Howard and Buglar, ran from the Ohio home after the murder of their infant sister and her subsequent "haunting" (5). Sethe, whose capacity for recollecting was exemplified by her tenacious hold on the memory of her mother, as well as other events such as Denver's birth, surprisingly described the remembrance of her boys as "fading fast" (6). Again, in Sethe's mind, the value of a family member was determined by the respect with which he/she honored the family. By running off in a time of family crisis, the boys displayed a lack of consideration for the family; this, according to Sethe, was truly



a case of “thin love.” Consequently, Sethe responded by suppressing any vivid recollections and remembrances she may have of her sons. In light of her other familial memories, the boys hardly receive mention. It seems that Howard and Buglar were also “nothing but men.”

Although Sweet Home was Sethe’s early experience with developing family ties (she also gave birth to three of her four children and conceived the last at Sweet Home), she escaped the plantation with fearful, angry sentiments. Sethe was finally spurred into flight when Schoolteacher, nephew to Sweet Home’s presiding family, robbed the pregnant and nursing Sethe of her milk. Shocked that someone could rob a mother of her baby’s first sustenance, Sethe used this anger, in combination with her constantly developing sense of maternal determination, to sustain her through the grueling journey into freedom. She gave birth en route to Ohio, and the young woman who assisted her felt pretty certain that Sethe would not survive (79). Still, Sethe and baby endured. Her already potent maternal drive carried her safely through the ordeal. As Sethe recounted her flight to Paul D, she explained just how resolute she was to rejoin her family:

All I knew was I had to get my milk to my baby girl. Nobody was going to nurse her like me. Nobody was going to get it to her fast enough, or take it away when she had enough and didn’t know it. Nobody knew she couldn’t pass her air if you held her upon her shoulder, only if she was lying on my knees. Nobody knew that but me and nobody had her milk but me. (16)

Sethe maintained a single goal, to be with her children again. In contrast to Baby Suggs, who could only remember that one of her eight children liked burnt toast, here Sethe confirms her very personal bond with her second youngest. Sethe’s own mother was not privy to such knowledge of her own baby’s needs. Sethe endured the journey because she was not going to allow her maternal role to be usurped by circumstance.

The same anger that drove Sethe into freedom and family also spurred her into another act, which to some is unforgivable. As she moved from the early experiences with her mother to her fledgling family experiences at Sweet Home, Sethe acquired an ever-growing familial attachment and motherly devotion. In other words, her love was constantly thickening. When she saw Schoolteacher approaching their Ohio farm, Sethe was left with what Otten referred to as a “tragic choice.” She could either relinquish her much worked for maternal power or she could exercise her last act of control over her children’s fate. Sethe opted for the latter, but succeeded only in slaying one of her children, a child who would come to be known as “Beloved.”

More significant than the murder itself is the possible resurfacing of Beloved eighteen years later. Whether Beloved is the murdered child or a fantastic coincidence is not the issue here. More importantly, this strange girl represents a cata-



lyst for Sethe's memory and an awakening of slumbering maternal love, as well as, a means for confronting the past. This would become Sethe's second journey from emotional slavery to personal freedom.

A great division between the community of free slaves and Sethe emerged as a consequence of her infanticide. After her jail term Sethe rejected the community, who also reciprocated the snub. No longer did the fellowship that once fed her often wearied stamina, as at Sweet Home, matter to Sethe. Karen E. Fields in her article, "To Embrace Dead Strangers: Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," tells us that, "Sethe invited no one's participation either way. When she returned from jail with Denver, neighbors and former friends left her to herself, and she sought no one" (167). Consequently, when *Beloved* appeared, Denver and Sethe and Paul D were living in virtual isolation. If *Beloved* was truly the ghost-come-to-life, then she too played a part in this ostracism for "124" soon became a place where people deliberately hurried past for fear of ghosts (4).

Was *Beloved*'s haunting an act of vengeance for her mother's "murderous love?" Or, perhaps, was she seeking something else, something her mother tried to create with all her maternal strength, but lost in a moment of tragic choice? Could the ghost be spiteful not because of her murder, but because of the family life she was refused?

*Beloved* was denied the family Sethe worked so hard to create. Howard and Buglar were willing to forsake the family that Sethe struggled to make possible, and as a consequence she began to suppress her memories of them. *Beloved* did not leave the family by choice, and in fact, was removed out of love. Whereas Sethe "forgot" the sons who deserted the family, *Beloved* is a forceful reminder of the daughter who represented the density of that familial love. If Sethe's maternal devotion was so great that it could carry her into freedom and permit her to murder her beloved child so that it might not suffer in the shackles of slavery, then might it also be strong enough to will that child back to the living so that she might reclaim her eighteen years of festering, burning love?

Fields also does not view *Beloved* as a revenge seeker. She argues that *Beloved* did return with some anger, but that it was not anger for her own murder:

The retribution is not for the murder, however, but for the separation. *Beloved* will not hear that she intended to kill all her children and herself so that they could go together to the other side or that Sethe's killing her had been a mother's act of protection. *Beloved* is not interested in plans or intentions, only in the result: that where she went had no mother. She hurls at Sethe again and again the accusation of abandonment. (160)

After all Sethe's toil to reunite the family in a free society where they could reclaim the family, *Beloved* was then denied all the benefits. So, yes, she was angry, but no, it was not vengeance she was seeking.



Consequently Beloved asked Sethe many questions in order to catch up with the family, to assimilate herself into Sethe's world and to make up for eighteen missing years. Beloved managed to evoke all sorts of stories from Sethe's memory, ranging from the story of the diamond earrings (119) to the scarce details Sethe had of her own mother (62). Beloved was the impetus for Sethe's remembering. Her questioning stirred sleeping memories: "[Sethe] had to do something with her hands because she was remembering something she had forgotten she knew. Something privately shameful that had seeped into a slit in her mind right behind the slap on her face and the circled cross" (61). In the quiet family setting of storytelling, Beloved forced Sethe to remember some of those things she would probably prefer to forget. Yet, in remembering them she came to confront her past and her guilt in a way that eventually would become therapeutic.

Beloved's appearance served to re-establish those familial connections Sethe relinquished once she enacted her tragic choice. After Beloved's murder Sethe passively accepted the community's rejection, permitting Denver and herself to live in isolation. For Sethe, this lifestyle was satisfactory. It was not the family life Sethe had worked so hard for, but it enabled her to go about her business and to tend the ailing Baby Suggs, as a daughter-in-law should. For Denver, a life of alienation cost her many friends and caused her to fear and resent her mother. She didn't hide these sentiments. Even in the company of Paul D., she reprimands her mother for daring to blame the haunting for their isolation, "It's not, it's not the house. It's us! And it's you (14)!"

Through her stirring of Sethe's memories, Beloved forced Sethe to recall what it was she once worked so hard to achieve. With these memories Sethe began to reclaim her identity and to re-associate herself with her maternal role. Prior to Beloved's visit, Sethe was a woman, living separate from her community and unwittingly neglecting her daughter's needs. After her experience with Beloved, she became a woman capable of stretching beyond the definition of mother, a woman capable of satisfying her own as well as others' needs. For Sethe, the journey between these two stages was as grueling as her escape into freedom.

Just as Sethe relied on the kindness of others to help her and her newborn reach Ohio safely, she also came to need assistance as she and Beloved journeyed into the past so that they could obtain a new freedom in the future. Denver emerged to lead her mother from the past that governed her, to the future that would free her.

As devoted as she was to her new "sister," Denver was still sensitive enough to detect the impending danger as Beloved's active interest in Sethe grew to immense proportions. One of the first things Denver noticed was how similar the two women became. "Dressed in Sethe's dresses, she stroked her skin with the palm of her hand. She imitated Sethe, talked the way she did, laughed her laugh and used her body the same way down to the walk, the way Sethe moved her hands, sighed through her nose, held her head" (241). The situation waxed dangerous as Beloved, like a voracious nursing child, seemed to absorb all of Sethe's



strength as if Beloved were actually sucking her identity directly from her mother: "The bigger Beloved got, the smaller Sethe became; the brighter Beloved's eyes, the more those eyes that used never to look away became slits of sleeplessness" (250). Sethe seemed to be succumbing to her guilt; that for her crime she felt she must sacrifice herself to this ghostly image of her murdered child. Without any other option, Denver, in an act of desperation, turned to the community she once shied from in order to find her family salvation.

Just as Sethe's love was powerful enough to commit infanticide, the devotion Beloved had been nursing from Sethe was growing so strong that, if not stopped, it might have compelled her to return the murderous favor. The two women loved each other too much, and as they attempted to cram eighteen years of deprived devotion into such a short span, the result was a virtual love-frenzy that without intervention would surely produce another death.

For her intervention, Otten recognizes Denver as the novel's heroine: "Once Denver begins to comprehend the enormity of Sethe's love and experience 'shame' for her mother's suffering, she herself becomes morally alive. She can assume responsibility and unite others to restore wholeness to a fallen community" (92). The community was glad to come to Sethe's assistance, because in the end they were all familiar with hardship. As the women approached Denver's home, they finally recognized themselves in the troubled family of 124. No longer did the crime seem unforgivable, no longer was this a haunted house to hurry past. They saw in Sethe and her self-destructing family all the afflictions slavery had caused, and they knew that Sethe's pain was the very same pain they too had been forced to endure: "When they caught up with each other, all thirty, and arrived at 124, the first thing they saw was not Denver sitting on the steps, but themselves. Younger, stronger, even as little girls lying in the grass asleep" (258).

They saw in themselves the ability to commit a love-crime. Deep in their own natures, bruised and battered by slavery, they too could have been driven to that unthinkable extreme. Only after Sethe was willing to recognize this possibility and truth in herself could the community do the same. Once Sethe fully understood the scope of her slavery and the thickness of her love—that not only did her guilt bind her body, but it bound her mind—she could finally free herself from this love-crime and finally forgive herself. A catalyst for remembering, Beloved served as Sethe's first guide away from the emotional slavery of her guilt. When these memories waxed too thick and threatened to further enslave Sethe, Denver intervened and brought Sethe and herself back into the sanctity of community. With her daughter's assistance, at the end of this journey Sethe found freedom, embodied in a community's warm acceptance, for the community too, in some way, endured the journey and now could finally comprehend the crime. Sethe's final declaration of "Me? Me?" (273) encapsulates this journey's end, for these words are not spoken by Sethe the slave, Sethe the daughter, nor Sethe the mother, but by Sethe the person.



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## Philadelphia as an Industrial Power

*Patrick Horan*

From the close of the Civil War up to the third decade of the twentieth century, Philadelphia was an industrial colossus. It had been the nation's first great industrial city, and its Centennial Exhibition of 1876 showcased to the world its new-found manufacturing power. It left a particularly deep impression on the Germans, as sixty-five years later, "while his armies were invading Russia, Adolf Hitler was to lecture his entourage on the Philadelphia fair as an event that turned German production from the bad and the cheap to the qualitatively superior."<sup>1</sup> Philadelphia was the country's greatest manufacturing center in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period in which no other city could rival it. After the First World War, however, the dramatic growth of the auto and steel industries in cities along the Great Lakes combined with Philadelphia's older industrial structure helped displace it from its leadership position in manufacturing.

Philadelphia's Chamber of Commerce proclaimed the city as the "Workshop of the World" in 1912, and it had adequate justification. The valued output of its factories in 1909 was greater than that of any other city, excepting New York and Chicago, and was greater than all but six states. The conclusions of the Englishman Arthur Shadwell in 1910 helped city aldermen fill their chests with pride after he conducted an examination of the industrial centers of England, Germany, and the United States:

"I have just called Philadelphia the greatest manufacturing city in the world and I believe it to be so. True it does not compare with such monstrous aggregations as London and New York, but they are not manufacturing cities in the same sense. They are primarily something else, and the manufactures are mainly accidental or secondary. They are there because the population or traffic is there. That is shown by their miscellaneous character and the small scale on which most of them are conducted. In the aggregate they employ a vast number of people and produce an immense quantity of goods, but individually they belong to the rather small than gross industries. But Philadelphia is primarily a manufacturing place and industries are carried on in very large establishments on a great scale."<sup>2</sup>



Philadelphia was the largest city and greatest port of Pennsylvania, a state which was frequently compared to the German Ruhr or British Midlands for heavy industry. Indeed, most of the city's prosperity came from the triumvirate that ruled supreme over the state's economy: coal, the railroads, and iron and steel. Yet it was not any of these three that brought the city the greatest distinction as a manufacturing center; it was in the production of textiles that the city was unmatched throughout the world. No other municipality could approach the volume of textiles made in Philadelphia, the diversity of them, or their quality. Even with such laurels, the city's textile industry was constantly overshadowed because no one large firm dominated it, unlike the situation in the primary and secondary metals industries. The facilities and reputations of companies such as Midvale Steel, Baldwin Locomotive, and Disston Saw easily eclipsed those of the largest Kensington knitting mills. Not surprisingly, Russel Weigley, in his book "Philadelphia, A 300 Year History," omits the textile industry as a pillar of the city's economic strength:

This [iron, coal, and steel] was the tripod on which the city's nineteenth century industrial reputation and a large share of its prosperity rested. If there were to be any single symbol of Philadelphia during this period it would be a steam locomotive: an idol whose temple was, eventually, Broad Street Station; whose priests, wreathed in the incense of steam and soot, ranged from workers at the Baldwin Works or brakemen on the railroad to those almost sacred beings, the directors and presidents, particularly those of the Railroad, the Pennsylvania Railroad.<sup>3</sup>

Railroads played a particularly prominent role in the city's economy. Three of the great continental lines of the country, the Baltimore and Ohio, the Pennsylvania, and the Philadelphia and Reading all had major terminals in the city. The largest and most powerful corporation in the country was the Pennsylvania Railroad<sup>4</sup>, which reigned supreme from 1874 to 1910, and was headquartered directly across from City Hall in the heart of the downtown. In 1901, half of the world's oil (for illuminating, not energy purposes) was refined and shipped from the Point Breeze plant of the Atlantic Refining Company<sup>5</sup>, all of which was tanked in from western Pennsylvania via the Pennsylvania Railroad. The railroads dictated the directions of the Quaker City's suburbanization, creating the exclusive areas of Chestnut Hill and the Main Line. Finally, the coal shipping facility of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad on the Delaware River in Port Richmond was the world's largest, permitting the city to retain a virtual monopoly in this highly profitable business.<sup>6</sup>

Another key member of the city's economic base was the iron and steel industry. Although Philadelphia was never a leading producer of these materials in bulk, relying on Pittsburgh, Bethlehem, Cleveland, and Gary, Indiana for their



supply<sup>7</sup>, it was a great center for the manufacture of secondary metal products. Two firms that helped Philadelphia establish this position were the Baldwin Locomotive Works and the William Cramp and Sons Ship and Engine Building Corp.

Baldwin was the world's largest locomotive maker and also the city's largest employer, boasting of a work force between 17,500 and 19,500 men during normal business conditions<sup>8</sup>. Located at Broad and Spring Garden Streets, its shops stretched for blocks all the way to Fairmount Park, covering seventeen acres. It tripled the productivity of its nearest rival, making 1500 engines a year by the turn of the century, and they could be found in every corner of the globe. According to a 1912 Chamber of Commerce report, a Philadelphian could find a Baldwin locomotive in Siberia, Palestine, Argentina, Australia, and even Uganda.<sup>9</sup>

Equally powerful on the Philadelphia industrial scene was Cramp's Shipyard. It had been in business since 1830 and had gracefully converted from wood and sails to iron and steam. It built such famous ships as the U.S.S. *Maine* and J.P. Morgan's yacht *Corsair*. In 1912 it launched the two largest battleships afloat, the *Wyoming* and the *Arkansas*. Like Baldwin it too covered a large amount of land, taking up more than fifty acres of the Kensington waterfront by 1902, and it also carried an international reputation. Cramp built warships for the Russian, Japanese, and Turkish fleets, and one of the sons of the founder, Charles Cramp, was decorated by the czar.<sup>10</sup>

Two other large firms of excellent repute in the metals industry were Midvale Steel and the Disston Saw Works. Disston was located along the Pennsylvania Railroad's main line to New York in the Tacony section of the city, and occupied fifty-eight buildings. It was another firm with a name recognized globally, in this case for the finest saws, as "every imaginable sort of blade for cutting wood was within its sphere of operations."<sup>11</sup> Midvale Steel was situated on fifty-eight acres in the Nicetown section, adjacent to the Philadelphia and Reading's rail yard at Wayne Junction. The company was a basic metals producer, something which, as mentioned earlier, was quite a rarity in the Philadelphia area. Only three other metal-working establishments manufactured their own materials for production during this era: Disston Saws, the Pencoyd Iron Works of Manayunk, and the suburban Alan Wood Steel Company, above the city on the Schuylkill River in Conshohocken.<sup>12</sup>

Midvale Steel also has the distinction of helping to raise industrial engineering to new heights. Frederick W. Taylor, a pioneer in the use of time and motion studies to increase worker productivity, received his start and formed his rudimentary principles at this steel plant. He is also important to North Philadelphia's demographics for his hiring in 1896 of two hundred blacks at the steel mill; these laborers soon formed an African American enclave in a section of the city that was overwhelmingly white at the turn of the century.

The large and well-known firms discussed above were integral parts of the city's economy, but they were atypical of most of Philadelphia's manufacturing



base. Two essential characteristics denoted the city’s industry. First, the size of its industrial firms was relatively small. Such firms as Pullman in Chicago, Ford in Detroit, and Carnegie in Pittsburgh were simply unparalleled in Philadelphia. Second, the city was known for the diversity of its products, as is born out by the 1910 Census of Manufactures. Of the 264 articles listed in the federal survey, 211 of them were made in the city.<sup>13</sup> Table 1 on the next page indicates this fact, revealing the wide variety of goods of which it ranked first, second, third, and fourth in production among U.S. cities in 1910.

Table 1

Rank of Philadelphia among U.S. cities for the production of the following goods, 1910.

First	hosiery and knit goods carpets and rugs other than rag hats, fur-felt locomotives dyeing and finishing textiles reupholstering materials cars, street railway oilcloth and linoleum sporting and athletic goods sand, emery paper, and cloth saws shoddy surgical appliances and artificial limbs
Second	sugar refining, excluding beet sugar clothing, women’s millinery and lace goods fertilizers paper goods, not elsewhere specified umbrellas and canes mineral and soda waters petroleum refining woolen, worsted, felt goods and woolen hats leather, tanned, curried, and finished
Third	printing and publishing foundry and machine shop products bread and other bakery products



Table 1 (continued)

	chemicals
	paint and varnish
	leather goods
	boxes, fancy and paper
	marble and stonework
Fourth	cotton goods and cotton small wares
	patent medicines, drugs, etc.
	furniture and refrigerators
	copper, tin, and sheet iron products
	soap
	confectionery
	electrical machinery, apparatus, etc.
	furnishing goods, men's
	shipbuilding, including boat building
	food preparations

Source: John J. MacFarlane, *Manufacturing in Philadelphia, 1683-1912*, p. 12.

Philadelphia was also synonymous with high quality products, and consequently possessed a highly skilled work force. The international reputations of Baldwin, Cramp's, and Disston has already been mentioned. Baldwin, despite its size and growth throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, held fast to its tradition of custom designing a locomotive to meet a patron's needs; it never had an assembly line nor a standard basic model to offer. Even more striking is the fact it did not have a single time clock in the plant, even though its workforce was approximately eighteen thousand men. Midvale Steel, like other Philadelphia firms, chose to specialize, demanding that it "solve the problems which most other steel makers preferred not to undertake."<sup>14</sup> Other notable manufacturers included the John B. Stetson Company, the world's largest hat maker and fabricator of the hat that won the West; the Allen Company, producer of the Flexible Flyer Sled; and A.J. Reach and Company, maker of footballs, boxing gloves, and the "official" American League baseball, as endorsed by A's manager Connie Mack.

Caroline Golab succinctly describes Philadelphia's economy during this period by contrasting it with the rest of the state of Pennsylvania. "Pennsylvania's economy stressed bigness, required large numbers of unskilled laborers, and was devoted to the more primary forms of industrial activity. Philadelphia's economy relied on old, well-established industries that stressed diversity, precision, smallness, and quality and relied on female, skilled, and semi-skilled labor."<sup>15</sup>



As was mentioned previously, despite the fame of a few large companies in heavy industry, it was textiles that held the foremost position amongst the vast enterprises of Philadelphia, both in the number of employees and establishments as well as the amount of capital invested.<sup>16</sup> In 1904 the city boasted of 229,000 workers, 35% of whom were textile employees, and their mills comprised 19% of the city’s 7100 total manufacturers. As Table 2 shows, six of the ten leading industries according to the value of their product in 1909 were textiles, constituting over one-fifth the total value of all industries. Philadelphia produced more textiles than any other American city and was also the world’s largest and most diversified textile center.<sup>17</sup> Table 3 reinforces this fact by displaying just how far the city was ahead of its competition, being greater than the combined total of its two nearest challengers.

Table 2

Leading industries in Philadelphia in 1909 ranked by product value (in millions of dollars)

1.	Woolen and worsted goods .....	54.9
2.	Printing and publishing .....	45.8
3.	Foundry and machine shop products .....	38.6
4.	Sugar refining (estimated) .....	37.6
5.	Clothing, women’s .....	30.1
6.	Clothing, men’s .....	29.0
7.	Hosiery and knit goods .....	23.9
8.	Leather, tanned, curried, etc. ....	23.5
9.	Carpets and rugs (other than rag) .....	22.6
10.	Cotton goods .....	22.5

Source: John J. MacFarlane, *Manufacturing in Philadelphia, 1683-1912*, p. 9.

Table 3

Leading American textile centers in 1910 ranked by product value (in millions of dollars).

1.	Philadelphia .....	153
2.	Lawrence, Mass. ....	70
3.	Fall River, Mass. ....	56
4.	New York City .....	52
5.	Paterson, N.J. ....	50



Table 3 (continued)

6.	New Bedford, Mass. ....	44
7.	Lowell, Mass. ....	41
8.	Providence, R.I. ....	37
9.	Manchester, N.H. ....	23
9.	Pawtucket, R.I. ....	23
11.	Woonsocket, R.I. ....	20
12.	Amersterdam, NY. ....	17

Source: John J. MacFarlane, *Manufacturing in Philadelphia, 1683-1912*, p. 14.

The organization of Philadelphia’s mills contrasted with their competitors and the rest of American business. As most firms were switching to the corporate form of management in the late nineteenth century, the city’s mills remained in the hands of one individual or family. This proprietary capitalism was diametrically opposed to the way its chief regional rival, New England, was run; a board of directors oversaw the companies in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Rhode Island.

The Philadelphia textile industry also differed from New England in its production format. Large integrated production units typified the New England firms. These companies fabricated the basic cotton and woolen material for the industry, avoiding for the most part specialty items and niche markets. They were bulk output mills which operated on economies of scale and speed and possessed unskilled workforces who put in steady regular shifts throughout the year. When markets contracted, these plants continued to function, building up inventories while at the same time trying to cover their high fixed costs and their need to pay dividends.

The Philadelphia mills, however, were based on economies of scope and timing. They did not have to produce the same item in immense quantities, but rather had to meet the capricious demands of the fashion world. Their products were not homogeneous goods with a long shelf life, but were rather perishable, and they could not dwindle away in stock rooms. These factories employed more skilled workers and men of expertise than their staple counterparts, but they were also highly prone to seasonal shut-downs and lay-offs. Finally, because their production was not fully integrated, these firms relied on other companies for work outside their own capabilities. This was extremely advantageous in that they were flexible to changes in the market, but it necessitated that they concentrate in a dense urban-industrial matrix.

Consequently, most of Philadelphia’s textile production was densely concentrated in Kensington, which was an ideal location with its numerous rail lines,



skilled workforce, and abundant factories. So great were their number that the Chamber of Commerce in 1912 proudly wrote, “from the tower of the Bromley Mill at Fourth and Lehigh there are more textile mills within the field of vision than can be found in any other city in the world.”<sup>18</sup>

The heavy concentration of textile mills in Kensington helped to give it a very British flavor, causing it to be nicknamed Little England.<sup>19</sup> English immigrant weavers from the neighborhood formed cricket teams to play against gentleman’s clubs from the Main Line. Their presence in the textile industry was indeed very strong, as the first textile union in the city was a local in the British International.<sup>20</sup>

The industrial might of Philadelphia had reached its acme with the outbreak of World War I. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, upon reviewing government war contracts in 1920, took note of the inordinate amount of military production inside the city:

Philadelphia’s all-round mechanical equipment, its convenient location with regard both to the supply of raw iron and steel and of fuel for manufacturing purposes, its vast population of mechanical talent, and its facilities for domestic and foreign transport, together with its extraordinary variety of skilled industries — these were some of the reasons for the remarkable concentration of ordinance orders and contracts in that district. So extensive had the volume of contract commitments in that district become as to awaken criticism on the part of others along the Atlantic coast and throughout the interior.<sup>21</sup>

One source estimated the city’s contribution to the American and Allied war efforts was a forty percent of the entire total<sup>22</sup>. All of the steel helmets worn by U.S. troops were made at the ten-story Ford Motor Company plant at Broad and Lehigh.<sup>23</sup> Three quarters of the leather used in the military’s boots, shoes, and saddles came from Philadelphia’s tanneries. Twenty percent of the wartime tonnage constructed by the U.S. originated in the city’s shipyards, with the facility at Hog Island responsible for the brunt of the production. Hog Island became a city in and of itself during 1917 and 1918, employing over 30,000 men and women in the swampy areas along the Delaware.

The First World War, however, turned out to mark the peak of the city as an industrial juggernaut. Writing about Philadelphia’s position of prominence in manufacturing in the late nineteenth century, Russell Weigley accurately saw it as being temporary: “Yet the promise for the future was less, for the city maintained the organizational patterns of the first industrialization; Philadelphia industry for the most part continued to be organized in a multitude of relatively small enterprises. Few individual firms employed large numbers of workers.”<sup>24</sup> As early as 1900 it was displaced from second place in the value of its manufactures by the meteoric ascent of Chicago. Twenty years later, another burgeoning factory town



of the Midwest, Detroit, had come to outrank it and push it down to fourth place. Over the course of the first two decades of this century, Philadelphia kept finding itself lagging behind the national averages for industrial growth, primarily due to the more rapid growth of the new manufacturing centers of the Great Lakes region. These municipalities were primary and secondary metals centers and were experiencing fantastic expansion rates. Detroit, for example, tripled in size from 1900 to 1920. Its factories were massive integrated production units which operated on economies of scale, whereas those in Philadelphia became diseconomies of congestion.

The city was indeed experiencing a transformation in its economy as revealed by the fate of its two industrial titans, Baldwin and Cramp's. Baldwin was past the golden years of the two decades before World War I and was facing a slow decline due to competition from trucks and automobiles. The increasing size of its engines forced it to abandon its seventeen acre Broad and Spring Garden site in 1920 and move down the Delaware to a 225 acre plant in Eddystone, Pa.

The shipbuilding industry was on the decline even before the Great War began and the fighting was not enough to invigorate business at Cramp's. A worldwide surplus of ocean going vessels combined with the economic slowdown after the war caused the Kensington landmark to close in 1927. Midvale Steel also faced difficulties, contracting its work force from 7,300 men in 1919 to 1,800 in 1928.<sup>25</sup>

Even Philadelphia's mighty textile industry was not impervious to decline. The remaining bulk producers in New England began to encroach upon some of the traditional markets of the Kensington mills by issuing semi-staple goods. These were items such as a navy blazer or a cotton overcoat that seemingly never went out of style. Unionization also enhanced wage differentials with Southern competitors, causing a few mills to relocate. However, the biggest reason for the decline of the industry was the post-war deflation, which hurt department stores holding large inventories. Retailers subsequently developed a hand-to-mouth buying plan that eliminated the need to hold onto any sizable inventories, thereby pushing the burden of cost onto the manufacturers and squeezing the mills' profits. In comparison to the emerging automotive and electrical sectors of the economy, textiles became a sick industry, especially in Philadelphia.

In conclusion, during the late 1800's and the first two decades of the twentieth century Philadelphia was a dynamic metropolis. The city was the workshop of the world, whose factories provided a vast array of products ranging from locomotives to baseballs. It was the leading textile center in the world, with Kensington acting as the city's locus of production. It was also a leader in the secondary metals industry, boasting of such firms as Baldwin Locomotive, Cramp's Shipyard, the Otis Elevator Company, and Disston Saws. World War I helped the city reach even greater industrial heights, stimulating an economy that was responsible for forty percent of the American and Allied war effort.

Despite its initial position of hegemony amongst American manufacturing cen-



ters, it was not able to maintain this status after the First World War ended. Its economic base, diverse products and the small size of its firms, became outmoded as new industrial titans emerged across the Midwest and along the Great Lakes. Cities like Pittsburgh, Detroit, Chicago, and Cleveland based their manufacturing on economies of scale, and their production rates simply dwarfed that of Philadelphia. The locus of the nation's manufacturing began to move away from the east coast to the Midwest, much to the detriment of Philadelphia.

### Endnotes

1. Russell F. Weigley (ed.), *Philadelphia: A 300 Year History*, p. 469.
2. John J. MacFarlane, *Manufacturing in Philadelphia, 1683-1912*, p. 11.
3. Weigley, p. 474.
4. *Ibid*, p. 475.
5. *Ibid*, p. 483.
6. *Ibid*, p. 430.
7. Philip Scranton and Walter Licht, *Work Sights: Industrial Philadelphia, 1890-1950*, p. 196.
8. Frederic M. Miller, Morris Vogel, and Allen F. Davis, *Still Philadelphia: A Photographic History, 1890-1940*, p. 77.
9. MacFarlane, p. 43.
10. Weigley, p. 480.
11. Scranton and Licht, p. 173.
12. *Ibid*, p. 196.
13. Miller, Vogel, and Davis, p. 73.
14. Scranton and Licht, p. 202.
15. Caroline Golab, *Immigrant Destinations*, p. 41.
16. Weigley, p. 481.
17. *Ibid*, p. 481-82.
18. MacFarlane, p. 39.
19. Weigley, p. 488.
20. Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of its Growth*, p. 180.
21. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Government War Contracts*, p. 318.
22. Herman LeRoy Collins, *Philadelphia, A Story of Progress*, p. 371.
23. Weigley, p. 559.
24. *Ibid*, p. 428-429.
25. Scranton and Licht, p. 199-201.



## Patriarchy and The Female Sublime

Eva K. Pankenier

The sublime, according to the definition presented by Kant, is that which is pleasing because it is ruleless and inspires fear. The element of fear is what separates it from the beautiful, which inspires calmness and serenity, but these responses are not as strong as the sublime. According to Kant, the more powerful sublime is masculine, whereas the beautiful is attributed to feminine objects. However, on closer examination of the criteria that differentiate the sublime and the beautiful, it seems that patriarchal culture has inadvertently positioned the female in the realm of the sublime.

In the first of five sections I use observations made by Lynda Nead in her book *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality* to show that the role of the female within the aesthetic tradition has been dualistic—regulated and controlled, the female nude is seen as beautiful, but without this containment, the female body has connotations with the unruly in nature. In the second section I describe Kant's explication of the sublime as "raw," "formless" and "unbounded" and compare these adjectives to those used by Nead in describing the non-beautiful female body. In the third section I discuss how it is that the patriarchal image of the female fits Kant's description of the sublime in his *Critique of Judgement*, but is inconsistent with his earlier *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*. In the fourth section I attempt to explain the apparent inconsistency between Kant's earlier and later works, in terms of how he defines the sublime. His attempt to reformat his definition of the sublime in *Critique of Judgement* to effectively exclude not only the female, but in fact, every object of perception seems unjustified. Lastly, I propose the idea that the female body, because it is more difficult to contain than the more muscular male body, is in fact sublime, especially if we use the Kantian/patriarchal criteria for distinguishing the sublime from the beautiful.

### Nead's Female Nude: Contained and Regulated

In *The Female Nude*, Linda Nead examines the prevalence of the female nude in art through history, arguing that "one of the principal goals of the female nude has been the containment and regulation of the female sexual body" (Female, p. 6). Ever since Aristotle defined ideals of beauty to be "order and symmetry and definiteness," it seems that art has been trying to create a female image that can live up to this standard (Female, p. 7). The difficulty in this attempt, at least according to Kantian thought, is in the act of containing and defining the female



body, in order to bring form and thereby beauty to something that is otherwise excessively voluptuous (Female, p. 9). Successful art, in other words, compensates for the inadequacies of the female body—namely its natural softness and indistinct boundaries—and by controlling its formlessness, create an object of beauty.

According to Nead, in the patriarchal view of aesthetics, “‘fat’ is excess, surplus matter. It is a false boundary, something that is additional to the true frame of the body and needs to be stripped away” (Female, p. 10). The role of the artist in this case is to mold that surplus into a representation of something beautiful. Taking this point a step further, Nead describes the case of Lisa Lyon, World Woman Bodybuilding Champion in 1979, who saw her own body as malleable and strove to harden and shape it by bodybuilding (Female, p. 10). By sculpturing the “raw material” of her body into something “hardened,” it has obtained “clear boundaries and definitions” (Female, 8-9). The essence of attempts like these, Nead says, is that of “controlling the potential waywardness of the unformalized female body and defining the limits of femininity” (Female, p. 9). Bodybuilding, in other words, is really a masculinization of the feminine by regulating the excess (i.e. fat) of the female body in order to let the muscle give it definition. And while it “blur[s] the conventional definitions of gendered identity,” Nead chastises bodybuilding for it “poses no threat to patriarchal systems of order” and merely obeys them (Female, p. 8-9). Having “reduced [her body] to the bare essentials,” Lisa Lyon has merely acknowledged that what was there before—an unworked female body—was, indeed excessive and unaesthetic (Female, 9). She seems to be buying into the belief that for woman to become “culture. . .the wanton matter of the female body and female sexuality [must] be contained” in the same way that the naturally more muscular male body is (Female, p. 11).

At this point, Nead makes a distinction between the naked and the nude. The female body in its unaffected state is merely naked, but in the process of being depicted as art (assuming this attempt is successful), a “sublimation” occurs, in which the female naked becomes a socially acceptable female nude (Female, p. 14). This “transformation. . .[is] a shift from the actual to the ideal—the move from a perception of unformed, corporeal matter to the recognition of unity and constraint, the regulated economy of art” (Female, p. 14). The artistic process, then, can be seen as an attempt to conform the female body to societal (i.e. patriarchal) standards of beauty. These societal standards furthermore, have, through most of history been dictated by men—the establishment referred to as patriarchy. The inherently sexual female body must be regulated in order for the (male) experience of judging the finished art-work to be truly “disinterested” in the Kantian sense of being objective and free of sexual attraction (Female, p. 13).

Furthermore, Nead asserts that the polarity between the naked and the nude—the raw material and the finished product—is only one of several pairs of traditional gendered opposites:



This basic dualism is associated with a number of other oppositional pairings such as culture and nature, reason and passion, subject and object, with the mind related to culture, reason and the subject, and the body associated with nature, passion and objecthood (Female, p. 14).

Not surprisingly, in patriarchy, "the positive values of the mind are associated with masculine attributes, whereas the negative values of the body are related to femininity" (Female, p. 14).

The apparent differences between male and female subjects imply that the depiction of the male and female nude pose very different challenges. In fact, through an examination of several classical works of art, Nead concludes that "there are clearly two distinct sets of criteria at work, depending on whether the body represented is male or female" (Female, p. 17). The prevailing image of the male nude is of a body, "powerful and in, as well as under control" (Female, p. 17). In contrast to the hardness and muscle definition of the male ideal, the "body of woman. . . is soft, fluid and undifferentiated" (Female, p. 17). What is more, with just a hint of psychoanalysis, Nead proclaims that there is evidence of a "deep-seated fear and disgust of the female body and of femininity within patriarchal culture" (Female, p. 18). This fear, it seems fair to conclude, indicates that in the male as well as in the female nude, "the threat of flesh must be remorselessly disciplined" (Female, p. 18). Inherent in the ideal of the male nude, in other words, is "a dread that the male body might itself revert to what it is feared may secretly be its own 'female' formlessness" (Female, p. 18). Still, in spite of the fact that the male ideal as well as the female demands the regulation of that excess that is feminine, it is in the female nude that this challenge is supreme.

Here, finally, Nead is able to offer an explanation for why there is such a prevalence of the female nude in art and why it is represented so much more frequently than the male nude: "If art is defined as the conversion of matter into form, imagine how much greater the triumph for art if it is the female body that is thus transformed—pure nature transmuted, through the forms of art, into pure culture" (Female, p. 18). In fact, "the female body is naturally predisposed to the contours of art; it seems simply to await the act of artistic regulation" (Female, p. 20). By being so wild and unruly, the female body apparently invites attempts to tame it. It is when the "ideals of the nude—structure, geometry, harmony" are satisfied that the excess and formlessness of the female body are successfully contained, and the result is aesthetically pleasing (Female, p. 22). Nead provides as an example the "Cycladic marble doll." She cites Kenneth Clark, in his book entitled *The Nude: A Study of Ideal Art*, who writes that in the Cycladic figure, the "unruly human body has undergone a geometrical discipline" (Female, p. 19). The result is a figure that is ordered and controlled, with its arms hugged close to its body.

If the artist fails to control the female body, and it is left unregulated, as it is in



Rouault's series of prostitutes, then the effect can be something entirely different from the beautiful. Nead describes Rouault's representation of the female nude as "swollen. . .unformed. . .[having] broken out of its framing contours" (Female, p. 22). She states, "if the ideal female nude, the beautiful, is conceived of in terms of unity and harmonious completeness, then the image created by Rouault belongs to a different category altogether, a category that invokes awe and fear through the recognition of something beyond limitation and control" (Female, p. 22). Rouault's image exemplifies the unaffected female body before is transformation into the nude. As such, it cannot be considered to be beautiful according to patriarchal criteria.

### Kant's Sublime: Crude and Boundless

According to Immanuel Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime," in the *Critique of Judgment*, we enjoy the beautiful and the sublime for some of the same reasons. For instance, our judgements of both depend upon a disinterestedness, without which sensual and moral attractiveness interfere with our ability to make an objective value judgement. Also, both seem to possess certain "indeterminate. . .concepts" which give the appearance of a rule-system that is just beyond our grasp, but nevertheless intrigues us (Critique, p. 97):

When we judge the beautiful, imagination and *understanding* give rise to a subjective purposiveness of the mental powers by their *accordance*, so do imagination and reason [in the case of the sublime] give rise to such a purposiveness by their *conflict* (Critique, p. 115-116).

Lastly, whereas "the beautiful in nature concerns the form of the object, which consists in [the object's] being bounded, . . .the sublime can also be found in a *formless* object. . .[in] *unboundedness*" (Italics mine; Critique, p. 99). In fact, Kant goes on to say that it is "in its *chaos* that nature most arouses our ideas of the sublime, or in its *wildest* and most *ruleless disarray* and *devastation*" (Italics mine; Critique, p. 99).

Having defined the differences between the sublime and the beautiful, Kant attempts to distinguish between their effects on us as well. Specifically, "while taste for the beautiful presupposes and sustains the mind in *restful* contemplation, the feeling of the sublime carries with it, as its character, a mental *agitation* connected with our judging of the object" (Critique, p. 101). But this is not surprising: The beautiful, because it is "bounded" and "form[ed]," will, by its nature, inspire peace and tranquility. The sublime, on the other hand, by being "excessive for the imagination" will cause excitement (Critique, p. 115).

According to Kant, we find the sublime "not in products of art, . . .where both the form and the magnitude are determined by a human purpose. . .but rather in *crude nature*" (Critique, p. 109). The cruder the better, apparently, because our



judgement of something as sublime is contingent upon its capability of "arousing fear" in us (Critique, p. 119). Consequently, our sublime appreciation of, for example, "overhanging and. . .threatening rocks, thunderclouds. . .accompanied by lightning and thunderclaps, volcanoes with all their destructive power, [and] hurricanes with all the devastation they leave behind. . ." depends on the fact that we are somewhat fearful of them even when we are in no actual danger ourselves (Critique, p. 120). About fear, Kant elaborates, "whatever we strive to resist is an evil, and it is an object of fear if we find that our ability [to resist it] is no match for it" (Critique, p. 119). Fear, therefore is a necessary component of sublime pleasure in the sense that we perceive something to be sublime if we are powerless in the face of it.

### The Sublime Ought to Be Linked to the Feminine:

It would appear that Lynda Nead's analysis of the attitude of patriarchy to the female body, as evidenced in art, coincides with Kant's definition of the sublime. In fact, most of their word choices are similar in meaning if not exactly so. Where Kant uses words like "formless," "unbounded," "ruleless," and "crude" to describe the sublime, Nead uses "unformed," "uncontained," "wayward," and "raw," in reference to the female body. The female body in this case is not to be confused with the female nude, which is the body transformed by art. Interestingly, Nead's entire argument around the patriarchal culture's "fear and disgust of the female body," and "the threat of flesh" echoes Kant's definition of fear as the realization of one's inability to resist an evil. In this case, the fatty excess of the female body can be seen as an evil that poses a threat to the image of the ideal male body.

Of course, as seemingly obvious as these parallels are, patriarchy in general, and Kant in particular, can not allow the female to hold such an important role in the scheme of aesthetic theory as that of the sublime. Instead, Kant goes to great pains to define, by gender, the beautiful and the sublime. This is most evident in his earlier work, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, which amounts to one long list of assumptions that define the female as beautiful and the male as sublime. The stereotypes he establishes are entirely consistent with those identified by Lynda Nead as the pattern of judgement of patriarchal culture. In Kant's summation of the criteria which define the ideal in the "fair" and "noble" sexes, he writes, "all the other merits of a woman should unite solely to enhance the character of the beautiful. . .and among the masculine qualities the sublime clearly stands out as the criterion of his kind" (Observations, p. 76-77). This declaration made, he supplies endless rationalizations to support it:

"Understanding is sublime, wit is beautiful. Courage is sublime and great, artfulness is little but beautiful. . .Veracity and honesty are simple and noble; jest and pleasant flattery are delicate and beautiful. . .Unselfish zeal to serve is noble; refinement (*politesse*) and courtesy are beautiful. Sublime



attributes stimulate esteem, but beautiful ones, love" (*Observations*, p. 51).

The beautiful is suited to be "ornamented" and "adorned," whereas the sublime is best represented by the "simple" and classic (*Observations*, p. 48).

In terms of intellect, Kant claims that females are in possession of "*a beautiful understanding*, whereas [that of males] should be a *deep understanding*, an expression that signifies identity with the sublime" (*Observations*, p. 78). Unlike a man, a woman will shy away from anything serious or difficult to resolve, "her philosophy is not to reason, but to sense" (*Observations*, p. 79). Not surprisingly, it turns out that although women may exhibit "good-heartedness and compassion," (*Observations*, p. 77) they are inherently amoral, leading Kant to proclaim, "Women will avoid the wicked not because it is unright, but because it is ugly; and virtuous actions mean to them such as are morally beautiful. Nothing of duty, nothing of compulsion, nothing of obligation!" (*Observations*, p. 81). Unlike a man, who is inherently moral and therefore sublime, any "sublimity of her soul shows itself only in that she knows how to treasure these noble qualities as far as they are found in him" (*Observations*, p. 94).

### Kant's Anxiety About the Sublime:

What are the implications of Kant's misogyny in *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*? Aside from the blatant sexism he espouses there, there is a confusing inconsistency between how well Kant's definition of the sublime fits the patriarchal attitudes toward the female body and the way *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* flat-out contradicts this assumption. Since *Critique of Judgement* is the later work, it is necessary to delve a little deeper to investigate what limits Kant places on the sublime in that work. Hopefully, it will be possible to see if that definition of the sublime really does accommodate the patriarchal view of the female body as it seemed to at first.

On closer examination of *Critique of Judgement*, the following statement takes on an added relevance: "We express ourselves entirely incorrectly when we call this or that *object of nature* sublime. . . Instead, all we are entitled to say is that the object is suitable for exhibiting a sublimity that can be found in the mind" (*Critique*, p. 99). In short, Kant has so narrowed the definition of what constitutes the sublime that "even the vast ocean heaved up by storms cannot be called sublime" (*Critique*, p. 99). How can Kant justify this break from the traditional concept of the sublime? His definition is so radical as to throw out all the usual images of the sublime, even those of his predecessor, Edmund Burke, who defined the sublime as those things which inspire "a certain tranquility mingled with terror," because objects are not sublime (Burke cited in *Critique*, p. 138).

Kant's explication of the new meaning of sublime rests on the premise that "that is sublime in comparison with which everything else is small" (*Critique*, p. 105). In apprehending something indeterminate, "the imagination fruitlessly ap-



plies its entire ability to comprehend," but reason is inadequate to fathom its "entirety" (Critique, p. 112). Still, "to be able even to think the infinite as a *whole* indicates a mental power surpassing any standard of sense" (Critique, p. 106). Hence Kant's assertion that "sublimity is contained not in any thing of nature, but only in our mind, insofar as we can become conscious of our superiority to nature within us, and thereby also to nature outside us" (Critique, p. 123).

The sublime, therefore depends on a scenario in which the mind encounters something "excessive for the imagination (and the imagination is driven to [such excess] as it apprehends [the thing] in intuition)" (Critique, p. 115). As a consequence of this much more narrow definition of the sublime, the "terrifying sublime"—which would have included the unregulated female excess—turns out not to be sublime at all. Evidently, objects are never sublime, they only act as catalysts to make us realize how sublime the human mind is.

Conveniently, Kant's reformulated idea of the sublime effectively eliminates the female's hopes of being considered sublime. On the other hand, though, Kant could be wrong in defining the sublime as the mind alone. After all, his definition is a radical change from past (and conventional) perceptions of what constitutes the sublime in aesthetics. He could very well be taking too much liberty in changing the meaning of the sublime from a word used in the context of describing objects to a word that describes the state of the mind as it apprehends those objects. The question is whether we have any reason to believe his justifications for altering the meaning of the word "sublime." Two considerations need to be addressed.

First, Kant's reasoning is evidence of a very rational personality. As such, it would be only natural that he dislike the relatively vague and inexact concept of the sublime. His conception of the sublime is, after all, what strives to explain the indeterminateness of "boundless" and "disarrayed" phenomena. Instead, Kant has tried to impose rigid criteria to aesthetic judgement in which only the human mind qualifies as sublime. Presumably, rather than confront the implication that the unruly female might be more sublime than the male, Kant reformulated his definition of the sublime as a quality of the mind—the mind being masculine of course. In this scenario, Kant himself was aware of the inconsistency in his gendering of the sublime as masculine. Instead of bringing it into the open and confronting it, however, he goes back to the beginning and reformulates his conception of the sublime to make it conform to his gendering.

A second factor to consider is the evidence from *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* of Kant's undisguised misogyny. Kant's forceful and uncompromising definition of the sublime can be seen as an attempt to deflect attention from a hypothesis about which he may actually have been quite insecure. He seems obsessed with trying to show that the mind and reason—male-gendered concepts—are superior to nature, which is female-gendered, because that is what he clearly wants to be true.



## The Female Sublime

Like Kant's clear-cut gendering of the beautiful and the sublime, many of the value oppositions in patriarchal tradition, outlined by Lynda Nead in *The Female Nude*, seem forced. "For Plato and Aristotle, and throughout the Middle Ages, the natural world had been conceptualized as female, as 'mother.' With his celebration of the scientific mind, Descartes effectively recasts knowledge and reason as masculine attributes" (Female, p. 23). Since that time, patriarchal culture has established a long tradition of polarized categories:

The term 'male' is associated with the higher faculties of creativity and rational mental processes, while the 'female' is demoted to the role of passive nature and associated with the biological mechanisms of reproduction. Thus in western metaphysics, form (the male) is preferred over matter (the female); mind and spirit are privileged over body and substance (Female, p. 23).

Into this tradition, Kant's version of aesthetic theory as explicated first in *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* and thirty years later in the *Critique of Judgement*, fits neatly. In addition, Kant adds to the list of gendered opposites, by contributing the gendering of the sublime versus the beautiful.

Another of Kant's important contributions to aesthetic theory is the idea of "disinterested" contemplation—which he says is necessary to making a pure aesthetic judgement (Female, p. 24). As Nead interprets Kant, "the beautiful is characterized by the finitude of formal contours, as a unity contained, limited, by its borders. The sublime, on the contrary, is presented in terms of excess, of the infinite" (Female, p. 26). Similarly, Derrida believes that the place of judgement is "not at the centre of the category where differences are most emphatic, but at the very limit, at the framing edge of the category, where the surplus or secondary term most nearly belongs to the main subject" (Cited in Female, p. 25). What Derrida is saying, is that it is at the contours of a body that we judge it to be excessive or not—where it interacts most with the surrounding environment. When the surplus or excess of the female body can be regulated, it becomes art, "and whilst the female nude can behave well, it involves a risk and threatens to destabilize the very foundations of our sense of order" (Female, 25).

It is precisely the disorder in Rouault's series of prostitutes mentioned earlier, that induces Kenneth Clark to conclude: "Rouault's female nude has broken out of its female contours; the body is swollen, it is in excess of art. But. . .it inspires us with awe and fear; it is apparently sublime" (Female, p. 22). Finally we see the goal of Nead's questioning of male- and female-gendered opposites. It seems that Kant's and patriarchal culture's worst nightmare has come true in that the role reserved only for the most moving of aesthetic experiences—the sublime—accommodates the patriarchal image of the female body so well. If the sublime is



that which titillates us with its frightening aspect, then the female body—unruly and with a contour that is difficult to control—is sublime.

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# The Iterability of Music: An Analysis of Derrida's Linguistic Theory As It Applies to Music

Jon Eisenberg

One of Derrida's main topics in the essay *Signature Event Context* involves the nature of writing and its ability to communicate a determinate meaning. Ultimately, the scope of his discussion is expanded to include all forms of language. Derrida asserts that for writing/language to succeed it must be iterable, where iterable means "repeatable in the absolute absence of the receiver or of any empirically determinable collectivity of receivers."<sup>1</sup> In other words, meaning should be able to be communicated whether or not the intended receiver is present.

In Peter Kivy's article, "The Fine Art of Repetition" (found in a book by the same name!), Kivy quotes Eduard Hanslick's treatise *On the Musically Beautiful*: "[Music] is a kind of language which we speak and understand yet cannot translate."<sup>2</sup> By calling music a language, music has entered into the realm of Derrida's discourse.

Two questions present themselves. First, how does internal iterability—'literal' repeats such as the repeat, *da Capo*, and *dal Segno* signs—function in (absolute) music? Does it affect the music/language connection? Also, what about the iterability of a musical score. I am not considering whether the notes—pitch, timbre, and duration—can be reproduced; rather, I am concerned about the iterability of the music—dynamics, tempo, phrasing, articulation, etc. Given music's non-specific 'alphabet', is even one 'ideal' performance possible? If not, does this prevent the musico-linguistic connection?

I will begin by summarizing Derrida's position on language and iterability.

## I

Derrida's general concern involves the ability of language to communicate determinate meaning. In general, words will have several meanings. It is only through determination of context that this set of meanings can be restricted in such a way as to allow one meaning to stand out. However, "context is never absolutely determinable."<sup>3</sup>

Without the capacity to establish context, the transmission of meaning becomes necessarily impossible.

The difficulty inherent in establishing context becomes apparent when one considers the relationship between the essential elements of all communication and the various means of communicating ideas. All forms of communication involve a sender and a receiver. The difference is that these two elements interact in dif-



ferent ways depending upon whether the adopted means of communication is oral or written. Oral communication allows two people to communicate directly. One advantage that speech has over writing involves the clearer transmission of context, and thus meaning, through inflection, tone, and gesture, as well as other forms of (determinate) emphasis which writing lacks. Also, there is a better chance that the sender and the intended receiver will be the only ones participating in the exchange. (The significance of this will be demonstrated shortly.) Due to the combination of these ideas, Derrida indicates that contextual indeterminacy does not pose a significant threat to the success of oral communication.

On the other hand, writing is plagued with features which prevent the reader from establishing a determinate context. First, inherent in written communication is the absence of the sender. Without the sender's presence, the number of contextual clues (such as the various means of emphasizing words that were listed above) is greatly reduced thereby diminishing the chances that meaning will be correctly communicated. Second, written communication can be received by many people either in addition to or instead of the intended receiver; the (intended) receiver may be absent. Here again there will be a reduction in the number of available contextual clues and this reduction will prevent the communication of meaning. Finally, there is the possibility that both the sender and the receiver will be absent. In this case, so much of the requisite contextual information is missing that the reader cannot determine the meaning of the words' interactions. Derrida arrives at his conclusion that "context is never absolutely determinable" based on the effects that each type of absence has on how meaning is communicated.

In *The Post Card* Derrida explores the ramifications of the last case, reading a written document when both the sender and the receiver are absent. If viewed simply as an extended example, reading this treatise causes one to experience the confusion which results when nothing is known about the sender, the receiver, or their relationship. In addition, Derrida exposes the implications of the middle case, where the sender is aware that there may be many unintended receivers of a given communication. Such a situation is inherent in sending postcards since anyone has access to the exposed side. Eventually, it becomes clear that all written communication shares this potential for unintended readers. The realization of this fact leads one lover to wish that his love letters would burst into flames upon being consumed by his partner so that no one else could read them. After all, the written word holds a great degree of power (especially when the reader does not know the exact context in which the words were written?) because the function of written language is to communicate meaning; iterability is built into written language.<sup>4</sup> I return, then, to SEC and iterability.

To understand why iterability is built into language you must understand Derrida's picture of the evolution of language. As indicated above, language began as speech. People wanted speech to both have more permanence and communicate with more people. As a result, they started drawing pictures which



referred to the same object that the sounds referred to. Once writing began, it continuously evolved and was refined so as “to gain or save the most space and time possible by means of the most convenient abbreviation.” In other words, “the same content, formerly communicated by gestures and sounds, will henceforth be transmitted by writing, by successively different modes of notation, from pictographic writing to alphabetic writing.”<sup>5</sup> In so far as this pictographic writing always referred to the same concept/object, the alphabetic writing was destined to do the same.

The above process insures that written language is iterable; it was the necessary (and intentional) result of written language’s earliest forms that it would communicate meaning, with or without the receiver’s presence. Derrida expresses this point when he says, “A writing that is not structurally readable—iterable—beyond the death of the addressee would not be writing.”<sup>6</sup> For writing to be writing it must function regardless of whether the sender or receiver is present or absent; that is, it must be iterable.<sup>7</sup> (Note that structural iterability does not imply that determinant meaning will result.)

Derrida concludes the “Writing and Telecommunication” section of *Signature Event Context* with two important ideas.

The first of these ideas involves the concept of a sign.

A written sign, in the current meaning of this word, is a mark that subsists, one which does not exhaust itself in the moment of its inscription and which can give rise to an iteration in the absence and beyond the presence of the empirically determined subject who, in a given context, has emitted or produced it.<sup>8</sup>

This sign is still readable (iterable) even if we do not know when it was first inscribed, even if we do not know the author’s conscious intentions when (s)he made it.

This sign then has the potential to be used in many other contexts. That is, the statement can be taken out of its present context and ‘grafted’ into some new context. Again, “Every sign, linguistic or non-linguistic, spoken or written . . . in a small or large unit, can be cited, put between quotation marks; in so doing it can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable.”<sup>9</sup> This, then, introduces a second type of iterability based on the ability to repeat a set phrase in various contexts, even when the origin of the phrase has been forgotten. (This second type of iterability matches what will be described below as internal repetition/iterability in music where ‘literal’ repeat signs, in any of their guises, are analogous to quotation marks.)

Derrida’s essay *Signature Event Context* presents several ideas about the nature of language and iterability which relate to music’s iterability (especially as the analysis by Kivy and myself, offered below, will show). All language is iterable.



This iterability, which allows the written language to continue to function even in the radical absence of sender and receiver, is based not on meaning, which, as a result of contextual problems, remains indeterminate, but on structure. Written language is based on the iterability of the sign—physical mark corresponding to spoken communication—which can be cited in numerous different contexts, regardless of whether the original meaning is still known.

We are ready to consider music as language.

## II

Before discussing music's iterability, several ideas need to be addressed. First, the relationship between music as language and Derrida's picture of language should be strengthened. Second, the ideas of 'structure' and 'meaning' should be defined as they apply to music.<sup>10</sup>

The best way to demonstrate the similarity between generic language and music as language is to compare the evolution of language (as presented in section one) with how music's language has evolved. The Western musical tradition began as a vocal gesture which was used during the Catholic Mass. The monophonic quality of these masses allowed them to be transmitted orally without any problem. However, changes such as the need for permanence, the need for wider distribution, and the addition of other vocal lines made oral transmission through generations more difficult. To alleviate these problems, monks began devising systems of writing music down. The initial attempts to write the music down were overly simplistic. For example, the first system of notation consisted of a single line above and below which marks were made to indicate the relation between the given note and the starting pitch. In addition to the lack of specific pitches, there was no attempt made to indicate rhythmic value. This system of written notation was (continuously) refined in an attempt to arrive at a more (economically efficient) form. Today's written music—a five line staff which allows the specific relationship between pitches to be noted as well as a sophisticated pictographic system of rhythmic markings—is much more effective. Still, during the last fifty years composers have continued to attempt to modify this so that it more closely resembles the music to be performed.

Clearly, then, the above history of (written) music follows an evolutionary pattern which is similar to Derrida's picture. Furthermore, today's musical notation, which is highly specific, is (necessarily) iterable. As with all languages, a system of signs must be learned, but, once this is accomplished, one can easily recreate the sound of any notated piece of music. We are ready to address the difference between structure and meaning with respect to iterability.

Derrida's account of language in *Signature Event Context* presented us with two types of iterability: syntactical (structurally-based) and semantical (meaning-based). Both forms of iterability exist with respect to music as language. However, I need to clarify what these words mean when they are applied to music.



The concept 'structure', as I will use it, refers to elements such as pitch, duration, and instrumental timbre which are precisely stated by the musical score. In this respect, music is a code that can be recreated even in the absence of sender and receiver. The language of music is such that there can be no question of its syntactical iterability.

On the other hand, 'meaning' refers to the more subtle and subjective elements of music—e.g., dynamics, articulation, phrasing, and tempo (to name only a few)—which cannot be drawn directly from the written score. To determine music's 'meaning' depends on a careful evaluation of the work's context. Contextually relevant events include, but are not limited to, the year when it was written, the event for which it was written, events in the composer's lifetime during which it was written, as well as possible structural and harmonic devices. A semantic iteration of the score attempts to combine all of the above ideas so that the piece's meaning is successfully conveyed to the audience.

Finally, I should clarify what is meant by a successful performance. A successful performance is one in which the composer's intentions are realized. All performances are attempts to achieve this end.<sup>11</sup> It is with respect to music's semantic iterability that the problem of the iterability of a musical score (alluded to above and discussed below) arises.

Before addressing the problem of the score's iterability, I will turn to Kivy's article "The Fine Art of Repetition" and 'literal' internal repetition, or syntactic iterability.

### III

In "The Fine Art of Repetition," Peter Kivy addresses a problem that he perceives with "absolute music"—that is, music without explicit connections to literature. This problem involves the function of literal repeats such as those indicated by the "double dots in front of a double bar, or *da capo*, or *dal segno*."<sup>12</sup> Kivy contends that the repeats are significant and, as a result, both aesthetic theories and actual performances of absolute music need to pay more attention to how they function.

Before presenting Kivy's argument, we should keep in mind how these 'literal' repeats relate to Derrida's iterability. Derrida says that all language must be structurally iterable. In other words, one must be able to cite independent syntactical groupings in various different contexts. In section two, the notion of the syntactical iterability as it relates to music was addressed. The 'literal' repeat that Kivy refers to involves taking a phrase—group of pitches and durations—and restating it at another point in the work's progression. There can be little doubt that such literal repeats are examples of music's syntactical iterability.

Kivy presents the reader with three theories with respect to the function of the repeat in the work of music. These theories are the 'literary' theory, the 'organism' theory, and the 'wallpaper' theory. Each of these theories is supposed to both



explain the repeat's function, and bestow music with the high status with which it is usually viewed.

As the name implies, the 'literary' theory talks about music in terms that are explicitly related to literature and linguistic structures. This theory viewed 'absolute music' as a temporally ordered discourse. As most linguistic models will do, music is then given its high place on account of its 'meaning' or 'content.'<sup>13</sup> Kivy observes that "musical repetition makes sense where linguistic repetition does not."<sup>14</sup> As a result, the 'literary theory' fails to explain how (why) the repeat functions in music. Therefore, Kivy dismisses this model's ability to account for music's syntactical iterability.

The second theory that Kivy presents is the 'organism' model. This model is also temporal and orderly. However, it lacks the 'literary' theory's discursive element. Instead, the 'organism' model describes a well organized progression towards a specific end (in symphonic music, this end is a metaphor for life). Although Kivy presents several problems with this account, the criticism most relevant to the current discussion indicates that using 'literal' repeats directly opposes the idea of progress. After all,

An embryo which followed the plan of a sonata movement, even where neither the exposition nor the development were repeated (which would omit some of the most imposing and well-known examples in the repertoire), when it got to the point in its progress to term analogous to the sonata recapitulation, would have to go right back to conception and start the process all over again.<sup>15</sup>

Since music relies on repeats, 'process' models (which includes both the 'literary' and the 'organism' model) must fail when attempting to explain the repeats function in music.

Where Kivy's other two models have failed, the wallpaper model succeeds in explaining the role of the repeat. This model, which (apparently) trivializes music, comes from §16 of Kant's *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement*. According to this theory, music is purely decorative; it does not have any intrinsic meaning or content.<sup>16</sup> More important in Kivy's estimation is the way that this account explains music's repeats. Wallpaper and Persian carpets are based entirely on repeated patterns. Music, for Kivy, is based on the same ideas but, due to its temporal nature, involves a 'prescribed way of listening' which is inherently more structured (and thus elevates music's status?). Musical repeats, then, "are the composer's way of allowing us, indeed compelling us to linger; to retrace our steps so that we can [grasp] the fleeting sonic pattern."<sup>17</sup> Ultimately, these repeats are an essential part of the composition; a part that should not be left out. After all, repeats do more than help us to grasp the pattern, "they are . . . part of what constitutes musical patterns in the first place"; repetition in music, according to



the wallpaper model, is part of the pattern that is there to help itself be grasped.<sup>18</sup>

How do these theories relate to Derrida and the iterability of (musical) language?

Kivy's rejection of both of the 'process' models seems to go against Derrida's conception of language. This rejection asserts both that iterability hurts spoken language and that music is inherently iterable. However, this only seems to be the case; there is a subtle equivocation involved in the use of 'iterability'.

When talking about iterability's detrimental effect on spoken language Kivy is referring to semantical iterability. This becomes clear when one notices that surrounding sentences focus on content and meaning. He is, then, asserting that meaning in language is not iterable because the phrase's context cannot be literally repeated, and thus the meaning will change. To this extent, Derrida would agree. However, when Kivy says that iterability is a necessary part of music, he is referring to syntactical iterability. This change is confirmed by the fact that the article is concerned with 'literal' repetition. Again, Derrida would agree in so far as he has stated that for writing to be writing the code (syntax) must be repeatable.

The problem, however, is that Kivy overlooks the equivocation. Such an oversight is confirmed when considering the inclusion of a point by Eduard T. Cone within Kivy's article.

Kivy cites the article "Inside the Picture: Problems of Performance" in an attempt to clarify the nature of repeat in music. Cone maintains that there is not "true redundancy" in music because "each statement is influenced by its position, by what precedes and what follows it, so that each is, in important respects, different from all others." Kivy summarizes: "what Cone seems to be saying is that there is no repetition in music: The palpable fact turns out to be a palpable fiction."<sup>19</sup> However, consulting Cone's text allows the context of his statement to be established. He does not assert that there is no syntactical repetition of music. Cone's concern, as the title indicates, is performance, and, as indicated above, questions of performance practice necessarily relate to semantical repetition. Cone is attempting, when saying that "each statement is influenced by its position," to indicate that whenever a phrase has been placed in a new context it should be reinterpreted accordingly (Derrida would agree with this point); in fact, Kivy acknowledges this aim but fails to grasp that he is involved in a different realm than Cone is.<sup>20</sup> Kivy's reading of Cone's article overlooks the distinction between the syntactical and the semantical iterability of (musical) language. This oversight results in Kivy rejecting a point that he himself had just accepted when talking about non-musical language.

Focusing on syntactical iterability allows one to understand how Kivy's conclusion concerning the function of repeats relates to Derrida's linguistic theory. Kivy shows that the function of internal repetition involves helping the listener to hear the pattern of which the repeat is itself a part.<sup>21</sup> This idea centers around the



inherent iterability of music. Saying that “[repeats] are . . . part of what constitutes musical patterns in the first place” is to acknowledge that (musical) language operates by taking a small number of signs which are constantly reused in new ways. That language can communicate anything is based on our ability to grasp patterns. “But, by definition, pattern is that very repetition.”<sup>22</sup> In saying this, Kivy is asserting that language is a self-generating pattern, the comprehension of which relies on itself. This idea is very similar to Derrida’s concept of iterability as that essential aspect of language which allows us both to generate more language and to understand what has already been generated.

In trying to explore the function of the ‘literal’ internal repeat, Kivy proposes three models: ‘literary’, ‘organism’, and ‘wallpaper’. The first two models are rejected because of an apparent contradiction between the iterability of language as opposed to the iterability of music(al language). In the end, this contradiction is based on an equivocal use of the word iterable. Once the equivocation is exposed, we see that (and Kivy unknowingly—unintentionally?—agrees that) language functions according to the model set out by Derrida. Moreover, the potential clash between language and music is avoided when the above equivocation is kept in mind. Ultimately, Kivy’s conclusion, that music is necessarily iterable, confirms my musico-linguistic connection and, at the same time, affirms the relationship between language and iterability that Derrida proposed.

It is time to move from music’s internal (syntactical) iterability to semantical iterability of a musical score.

#### IV

In *Signature Event Context*, one of the elements that Derrida describes as preventing language’s semantic iterability is absence, either of sender, receiver or both. Without one or both of these people, the context in which the sign was recorded becomes lost and without context meaning remains indeterminate. While losing the context will not, by definition, interfere with the reproduction of the musical sign, significant problems arise when one is attempting to create an ‘ideal’ performance.

Performing a score necessarily involves the absence of the sender—that is, the composer. That this is case is obvious when one considers the case where Anne Sophie Mutter, a violin virtuoso, performs a piece by Paganini. However, even if Paganini were to perform his own piece the composer would still be absent. Although he performs his own work, it is Paganini qua performer that reproduces it on the violin whereas it was Paganini qua composer that initially recorded the signs. It would seem, then, that with respect to musical language, “context [remains] absolutely undeterminable.” (Although the absolute possibility of an ideal performance cannot be excluded, such an event would have to be the result of chance and thus is not relevant to this consideration of the capacity to communicate a determinate meaning via the language of music.) Consequently, the musi-



cal score is not (semantically) iterable; the 'ideal' performance would seem to be eternally elusive. At the end of Cone's article, he makes a similar conclusion:

And even though the ideal performance may be a chimera, some performances are, after all, better than others. Some are superlative, and some are unacceptable. Although we can never achieve perfection, we must still do the best that we can.<sup>23</sup>

## V Conclusion

In *Signature Event Context*, Derrida presents his theory of language. The first section of this essay, "Writing and Telecommunication", indicates that iterability is an inherent feature of all languages. This iterability has two forms: syntactic and semantic. All languages share syntactic iterability which means that they are made up of structures which can be repeated an infinite number of ways. While syntactic iterability is necessary, it impedes semantic iterability. Combining the fact that the same signs can be used in numerous different ways with the fact that there is a necessary absence of at least one of the participants in written correspondence prevents the context of a written message from being determinable. Since words can mean many different things, this lack of context prevents one from being able to determine what a given statement means. Ultimately, Derrida indicates that the fact that language is structurally iterable leads to the fact that it lacks determinate meaning.

As most people would agree, music is a form of language. Not only can one view music as a form of language, but the ideas of syntactic and semantic iterability apply to it as well.

From Peter Kivy's article "The Fine Art of Repetition" one can consider how Derrida's ideas about language apply to music's internal iterability. His conclusion can be interpreted as agreeing with Derrida's; musical language is based on iterable patterns. Furthermore, with respect to Kivy's specific topic, we see that this tendency towards patterns not only makes up the musical language but enables one to understand these patterns.

We are left, then, with the case of whether or not a musical score is semantically iterable (remember that musical semantics refers to subjective elements of a performance). Due to the necessary absence of the sender, the context remains indeterminate. Therefore, it is impossible for there to be an intentionally ideal performance. While a musical score is structurally iterable, it lacks determinant meaning.

There is then, an interesting connection between language, in the general sense, and music. Both forms of language are structurally iterable, and both lack determinant meaning. While one can assert gradations in the quality of the interpretation with a high degree of confidence, we are left unable to know exactly what the



sender meant. Such a conclusion would seem inherently bad. I am not sure that this is the case. I close with Cone's thoughts upon reaching a similar conclusion:

It is just as well that there can be no such thing as an ideal interpretation. For if there were, we might long ago have ceased listening to Mozart and Beethoven. It is the renewed vitality of each performance that keeps them alive.<sup>24</sup>



## Endnotes

1. Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc*, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p. 7.
2. Peter Kivy, *The Fine Art of Repetition: Essays in the Philosophy of Music* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 347; my italics.
3. Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc*, p. 3.
4. Ibid., p. 7.
5. Ibid., p. 4.
6. Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc*, p. 7; my emphasis (Notice that he says structurally (syntactically) iterable and not semantically iterable.)
7. The combination of this conclusion with the lover's desire that only the intended receiver would receive (read and understand) his letters results in a paradox. What we want is for written language to establish context in a concrete fashion; there should be only one thing that a set of words refers to. However, as soon as this happens language ceases to exist. The phrase would no longer be iterable, but would refer to one object, in a specific place, at a specific time. In other words, a determinate context is diametrically opposed to a functioning language.
8. Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc*, p. 9.
9. Ibid., p. 12 .
10. Throughout this paper, all references to music will be based on the Western tradition, if for no other reason than to facilitate discussions of specific issues.
11. Edward T. Cone, *Musical Form and Musical Performance*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1968) p. 38.
12. Peter Kivy, *The Fine Art of Repetition*, p. 328.
13. Ibid., p. 330.
14. Ibid., p. 335.
15. Ibid., p. 338.
16. Ibid., p. 344.
17. Ibid., p. 352.
18. Ibid., p. 353.
19. Ibid., p. 339.
20. Ibid., p. 340.
21. It seems ironic that this conclusion, that repeats are essential to the structure of a work of music, seems to be taken from p. 46 of the Cone article the conclusion of which he has just attempted to refute.
22. Peter Kivy, *The Fine Art of Repetition*, p. 353.
23. Edward T. Cone, *Musical Form and Musical Performance*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc, 1968), p. 38.
24. Ibid., p. 56.



## Blissful Degradation

*Jonathan Place*

(2/14/94) Would like to say the words, blissful degradation before I forget them. They have been embedded while spending some time on 3rd and 11th Street in Manhattan. Got on the train from New Rochelle yesterday to Grand Central - from Grand Central to Astor Place, Greenwich Village. Grand Central subway rather frightening - homeless folks, helpless man sprawled out in the hallway, his feet in a twisted and dangling formation out to his side. He held his palm face up in the air - about a foot off the floor, like a child checking for rain. His eyes a ghostly and glazing white drifting into the opposite wall - focusing in and out upon you. He's talking to somebody, maybe himself - a lot of slur and mumble - anger and detachment in his voice. What brought him here?

Went to the lower station - the surroundings drove my head and eyes down into the floor; I feared what I saw. Extremes of attitudes - there were those most comfortable, those most powerful and intimidating, and a nervous man with the flaps of his hat pulled snugly to his collar bones, his hands shoved hard between his knees. His shoulders scrunched up towards his ears - squeezing his neck out of sight. His eyes danced and darted with uncertainty. His lips shivered silently with insecurity. But how loud was that voice screaming inside his head?

On the subway car, a black man lying on the floor as another man dressed in Authority, wearing a badge named Security comes and yells and screams at him to get his ass up. He threatens with handcuffs. The tired man mumbles in his sleep. All else pay no attention - casting an indifference upon him. People step over him, people talk through their little conversations with their friends. Others sit in silence, thinking. An indifference, a seeming lack of care or concern. At least nobody expresses their concern. Another homeless on the car gives the man a nudge to make sure he's alright - to make sure he's still alive. The sleeping man responds to the nudge. The concerned man says O.K., nods, and walks on. The only one to take the time - the only one to express a sincere concern for the tired man's welfare. The sign outside Grand Central says, "Do Not Give Money to People." Reminds me of the zoo, a sign one would see in the zoo, "Do Not Feed the Animals." But these are human beings in here, fenced in and caged up. But the cage is so well hidden, we do not see what it is that keeps them down. We do not see what it is that bars them to the streets as we walk by, daring not to look into their eyes, daring not to wonder, daring to ignore, daring to toss them a dime. For whose gain has the cage been erected? Who or what has driven these people



into the cement streets? Why is the cage so well hidden?

In the Village there are measures to create a distracting happiness - objects to bring pleasure to the mind, and a holiday from conscience - only pleasure - happiness is the priority here - drugs, rice wine, pornos, music, and dance . . . I look outside the window and into the "Village Voice" to see phone lines, theatre, and music. Let's spend our money here, it will be fun. We'll have such a good time. . .

The Limelight used to be a church, stained glass and vaulted ceilings - an impressive sight with stained glass and multicolored rooms. Lasers shooting overhead with a tall and beautiful woman dancing in a suspended cage - she's very graceful and seductive with her underwear as an outerwear. Another's white pants hug her hips tightly as they hang loosely from her legs. All walks of life at the party, drinking and smoking; dancing and dancing to the synthesized music. It is 2 a.m. and a man on a drum is banging away with his palms, hard and striking. Men and women all around - a timely, blissful scene. Everybody is having fun - concentrating on the joys of the night, not concentrating at all - but moving and feeling good. How about the man in Grand Central hallway, how about the tired man on the subway floor? No it is not him people choose to see, dying in his suspended cage. We give our money and attention to a dancing figure instead. We spend our time with her because she is not real, she is for our fantasies, only for our imagination is she, suspended above and out of reach. But this man, we can get close to him, close enough to touch, we can hug him if we want, we can smell his breath, see into his eyes, and hear him breathe. But the man on the street disturbs us, even repulses us, so we look and look and look away. Yes how about them - signs of problem.

For simplicity's sake we could call it overpopulation. Right, there are too many people alive today, that's overpopulation, that's the problem? Right? Yeah. Too many people living? Is a problem? Not enough dead? Right? Yeah! Or no, it's survival of the fittest, it's every man for himself, right? That explains it, doesn't it, the strong survive and the weak . . . well what good are they anyways, they can't even help themselves. That's it, we'll let them die.

Shall they be rescued from what's creeping into their gaze? I search for the answer, but none can be found. I hear myself blame the intangible "them." I hear people blame the victims. I hear myself blaming the other. And everyone seems to have an explanation, everyone has a name to call; they're "beggars" or "bums" or they're "addicts" or they're "manipulators" or they're "liars." It seems that we all have explanations and answers to put the problem to rest in our own minds, but not out there. The problem is still there. And I may ease my conscience and from guilt and responsibility with theories and scientific reasoning of social thought. But that is no answer. That does not ease any of the pain, that does not feed any mouths nor clothe any bodies, nor find home. Maybe if we pointed our fingers at ourselves, if we just looked at ourselves for once. Quieted our restless thoughts and listened to something else for a change. For once not run and try to



escape. Listen to the beat of your own heart for it is no different than the beat of any other. That is all I know. I guess that's what I need to tell myself.



# The Uprising of the Urban Ghettos in Los Angeles: The Watts Riot of 1965 vs The Rodney King Riot of 1992

*Lara Jae Glazer*

American society is plagued with racism. Although most people will no longer openly claim that some races are innately inferior, hidden racism provides a justification and rationalization for the unequal distribution of resources in the United States. Such discrimination among people living in the same country causes conflict. Racism has seeped into the institutions of our society making this conflict difficult to recognize and resolve. As a result, minority groups may become frustrated with efforts to better their condition. Two riots in particular demonstrate the changes in American racism: the 1965 Watts riot and the 1992 Rodney King riot. Both riots took place in Los Angeles, California and involved poor urban ghettos. Neither riot had any real leaders and they were both fueled by incidents of police brutality. At first glance it may seem as if history is simply repeating itself with the Rodney King riot. Yet, taking a closer look reveals many real differences, differences that reflect our society's change from overt to covert racism, as well as our current problems with "the urban underclass" (Kaus, 1992).

The Watts riot began on August 11, 1965 and lasted five days. The catalyst for the riot was the arrest of Marquette Frye, a young black male, for drunk driving. The brutal arrest of Frye, along with the unjustified apprehension of his mother and brother, was carried out by the police in front of a crowd of spectators from Watts, "Los Angeles' poorest and largest black ghetto" (Sitkoff, 1981). The crowd responded to the police brutality with violence, igniting a huge riot two days later.

Unlike the Watts riot, the Los Angeles 1992 riot broke out with tremendous speed. An hour and a half after the Rodney King verdict was made public the city began to burn. Rodney King, like Frye, was a black male arrested for drunk driving. During his arrest he was severely beaten by police officers while a crowd of onlookers watched and one man videotaped the incident. This videotape of police brutality was shown across America as evidence of an event that occurs daily in the inner cities. No outbursts were noted until the case was taken to the justice system and the verdict revealed. The jury believed that the officers were merely doing their job and acquitted them. The arson, looting, and violence thereafter occurred as a response to a perceived racist criminal justice system.

Another major difference between the two riots concerns the participants. In 1965 the rioters were mostly young black males who were frustrated with the nonviolent protest of the civil rights movement. Over the years, the South-Cen-



tral L.A. ghettos transformed from being predominately black to multiracial: "48% black and 45% Latino" (Meyerson, 1992). Meyerson (1992) points out that the L.A. ghettos are also more "economically isolated than at the time of Watts," thus increasing frustrations throughout the ghetto. These two conditions combined to produce rioters who were black, Hispanic, white, men, women, and children: "an equal opportunity riot" (Meyerson, 1992). While the people in Watts in 1965 formed a political demonstration, the rioters of 1992 formed a violent crowd fueled by greed.

The 1965 rioters' violence was concentrated on the whites who had oppressed and exploited them for so long. This was demonstrated by their targets of looting and arson which were "commercial establishments usually selected on the basis of kind and degree of exploitation their owners practiced," and "burning did follow a more general pattern to the extent that residences, community, and government buildings were rarely fired" (Model, 1990). These patterns contrast tremendously with the 1992 riot, during which the violence and burnings were more widespread and had no concern for buildings owned by other minorities or ones that were beneficial to the community. According to Meyerson (1990):

two public libraries, the oldest black-owned bookstore in the USA, the district offices of South-Central's most effective and militant elected officials, and the headquarters of the Watts Labor-Community Action Council, one of the few Watts-based organizations that rebuilt that community after the riots of '65 all were destroyed.

There was no sense of community in this riot. While in the '60s people tried to make a political statement, the rioters of the '90s were out for their own personal gain.

Along the same lines, the riot in 1992 differed in that there was black against black violence which did not occur in the '60s. This shows that the 1992 riot was less about race and more about class. In the Watts riot, the rioters did not destroy their own neighborhoods; "...one in five rioters was from the immediate area: most were outsiders" (Gest, 1992). But in the 1992 riot, people attacked anything in close proximity including stores and neighbors. This lack of respect for their community shows a desperation that has spread throughout the inner cities. While in the mid-'60s people had confidence that their situation could and would improve, in the '90s people feel in their hearts that their situation is hopeless and so why not burn everything in sight? Sociologist William Wilson (1992) suggests that,

the problems in the inner cities have actually gotten worse since the Kerner report. There's a growing concern over poverty, increased joblessness and greater economic disparity. At the same time since Reagan entered office, urban problems have received less attention on the national agenda.



Thus, the situations in the ghettos between 1965 and 1992 differ, giving way to riots of a different nature.

The availability and accessibility of weapons is another example of how the two riots differed. The damage done by both riots was extensive. At the end of the 1965 riot "34 people had died, 1,032 were injured...property damage was forty million dollars" (Jeffries & Ransford, 1969). The 1992 riot left "44 dead, 2,000 bleeding, and \$1 billion in charred ruins" (Washington, 1992). One reason for the differences between the damages in the two riots may be the weapons that were used. In both riots arson was rampant but in 1965 people used mostly bottles and rocks, while in the '90s rioters were using automatic weapons and had arsenals of fire power.

The damages are also related to the amount of violence throughout society during the two time periods. The violence of the '90s was of a much more gruesome character. Although both riots were televised, the 1992 riot media coverage was much more explicit. This may stem from our society's desensitization to violence and death. In the '60s "real violence retained its power to shock" (Hertzberg, 1992). But after years of seeing thousands of brutal beatings on television and in movies, our society is no longer shocked by such violence. This may have had an effect on the extensive television coverage of the 1992 riot, as well as on the public's reactions to it. "It's hard to believe that...[exposure to violence] hasn't had its effect on the cops who beat Rodney King, the jurors who acquitted them, the citizens who rioted, and all the rest of us" (Hertzberg, 1992).

Our society's desensitization to violence in the '90s may have been just one of the factors contributing to the differences in the public's reactions toward the riots. The Watts riot of 1965 had a lot of support from middle-class blacks as well as whites; "large numbers of whites were in some degree sympathetic to the rebellion" (Morris & Jeffries, 1968). On the other hand, in 1992 the public was outraged and terrified of the rioters who seemingly were out for personal gain and to destroy each other. Even the reaction of the victims who began these riots differed. Frye supported the Watts riot of 1965 and saw it as a means of communication with the white community to promote social change. King (1992), on the other hand, was scared of what he witnessed and wanted it stopped; "Can we all get along? Can we stop making things horrible for older people and the kids? Rioting is just not right. It's not going to change anything."

The aftermath of these riots resulted in different outcomes. "Immediately after the 1965 riot, millions of dollars were channeled into the area by government agencies and private corporations" (Gest, 1992). Such actions taken by the government made the rioting a success by helping the community receive the attention it needed. Meanwhile, now in the '90s, economic situations have become worse. Following the 1992 riot the public's reaction was not one of sympathy but of disgust. The government may have helped to restore the extensive damage, but poverty and racism are still low on the national agenda.



Racism and discrimination over the years have moved from overt forms to covert forms. No longer is racism or discrimination allowed by law, but nevertheless these harmful attitudes continue to persist and corrupt our institutions causing conflicts such as the violence of the 1992 riot. The conditions in the ghettos since the '60s are becoming worse. The confidence that the rioters possessed in the 1965 riot that things would get better has disappeared for the rioters in the 90's. Crime and poverty are increasing daily causing this new, multiethnic underclass to get caught in a "vicious cycle of poverty" where there is no hope left for them or for their children.

Our society is at fault for this hopeless condition of the inner cities. As William Wilson (1992) states, "there is an association between declining resources in the neighborhoods and increasing social problems." The movement of high-paying jobs out of the ghetto has left behind an overcrowded land with no opportunities available for the residents within. Our government needs to help rid these people of their low status thereby allowing them to get jobs and increase their resources; "only the experience of work can integrate the underclass poor back into our society" (Goodell, 1992). The isolation of the ghettos must be broken and the people within must be allowed into the mainstream of America. Although the Watts riot of 1965 and the Rodney King riot in 1992 occurred under very different circumstances and had many different characteristics, our nation can learn from these incidents. Such riots open our eyes to the overwhelming neglect of the poor and the fact that institutionalized racism and discrimination keep this "urban underclass" intact.



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## A Look In the Mirror

*Kristina Olsen*

I have always feared my father. His reactions were so unpredictable. The littlest things would set him into a rage and I never knew when or why. I lived in fear of this rage, tiptoeing around whenever he was near, and avoiding him whenever possible. Until I was ten, I have barely any recollection of him, only memories that are vague and indistinguishable. When I was ten years old, however, I suddenly learned the logic behind all of my fear and confusion: my father was an alcoholic.

It was a cold Minnesota winter day, and I had just moved back to my mother's house from my father's house. My mother and father had divorced when I was eight years old. Their solution to the custody battle was that my brother, sister, and I were to live at each parent's house for five weeks at a time and the third weekend during each five week period would be spent at the other parent's house. Switching houses so often was not as difficult as it sounded. Usually we would just throw all of our clothes into cardboard boxes to move them from one house to the other. But on this cold, winter day I packed everything, including my stuffed animals, before leaving for my mom's house.

My mom and I went to one of my brother's hockey games that night. On our way back from the game, we stopped at a restaurant to pick up burgers and milkshakes to take home for dinner. It was my favorite meal, and I think my mother sensed that I needed something special that night. As we were waiting for our food, my mom asked me if I was going back to Dad's. I shook my head side to side as tears swelled into my eyes.

"I could tell by the way you packed," she told me.

"I just don't like it there. He's always yelling at us, and he scares me."

"Kristi," she tried to comfort me, "that's not really your dad. It's his alcoholism. You're father is an alcoholic."

Without even thinking, I responded, "No he's not." But, as I said it, the sound of his footsteps echoed in my ears. Every evening he would go to bed at 9:00 or 9:30. I never understood why because he never went to sleep; about every half hour or so I would hear him walk from his room to the kitchen. I would hear the seal break as he opened the freezer door, the ice cubes clinking into the glass, the thunk of the freezer door shutting, the ice cubes crackling as he poured the gin, the refrigerator door open, the fresh spray as carbonation escaped from the tonic water, the thunk of the refrigerator door shutting, and then the rattling of the ice



cubes trailed down the hallway as he wandered back to the bedroom.

"He is," I said half in question half in statement.

"I always tried to hide it from you children. Every night when he came home from work, he'd start drinking. By the end of dinner he'd be drunk, and I would convince him to go to bed. I guess I did a pretty good job of hiding it."

I was always confused by the fact that in all of my young childhood memories I never remembered my father being there. I had memories of my mom, my brother, and my sister, but nothing of my father. This was the piece of information that had been missing from the puzzle all of those years. My father was never around because he had always remained drunk in the bedroom. My memories of him were always vague up until I was eight years old because that was when we started living at his house for five weeks at a time. That was when my mother was no longer around to hide him from us. That was when my fear began.

I had one vague memory of him before the divorce, but I had never been sure whether it was a dream or whether it had really happened. I remembered it only in bits and pieces. My brother, sister, mother, and I were sitting in a waiting room of some sort waiting for my father. It was a happy occasion. Next we were all walking through a park together, it was really big and well groomed—like a golf course. We were going on a picnic. I didn't remember actually having the picnic. I just remembered the waiting room, the park, and the happiness. It was a memory that had always bothered me because of its haziness.

My mom now told me that he had gone to a rehabilitation center before the divorce. She had sent him to Hazelden, one of the best alcohol recovery programs in the country. The hospital was in Minneapolis, a big city about an hour and a half from our house. We had gone to visit him one day; she wondered if I had remembered it at all. I asked if we had gone on a picnic and if there was a big park. She said yes.

My father unfortunately returned to drinking shortly after his release from the recovery program. Now that he was a presence in my life, my memories of him were always of his drunken state. I remembered him sitting outside on the patio. It was summertime, and my brother, sister, and I were living at my father's house. He had passed out in his lawn chair, and we couldn't get him to go inside. My sister nudged him and tried to tell him to go to bed and sleep. He lifted his head, grumbled a bit, and dropped it again. I had always been told that my father was a heavy sleeper, and I didn't understand that this comatose state was a result of his drinking. I thought it was so silly that he could just fall asleep in his lawn chair like that. We went and asked my step-mother to wake him up and get him to bed. She went outside and woke him up, but his first response was that my sister, Katie, had called and he had to go pick her up somewhere. I was still laughing because I thought he had gotten so confused in his sleep that he didn't know what was going on.

While in fifth and sixth grade, I was in a group that met once a week at school.



There were about ten children and two adults. The group was for children of divorced, alcoholic, or abusive parents. I had always thought that I was just there because my parents were divorced. Still I didn't really see the point in my being there. I had no problems with my parents' divorce. Each year we would watch a film called "Tender is the Heart of a Child." It was about a family with an alcoholic father. The father got really angry every night and hit the mother. He never kept his promises to the children. At school, they always pretended that there was nothing wrong at home. I used to sit and watch that movie and think how scary it would be to have an alcoholic parent.

The adults of this group would explain what alcoholism was and what it did to a person. Each week as I sat there, I never thought that what they were saying could pertain to me. An alcoholic was someone who drank too much and too often. From what I could understand, he would abuse his wife or children, or both. How was I to know what a "normal" drinking habit was? Sure, my father drank, but so did everyone else's parents. I thought my father's drinking habits were as normal as anyone else's because they were the only drinking habits I ever knew. Besides, he never abused us, physically.

What I realized after my mom told me about my father's problem was that he had abused us. He never hurt us with his hands; he used something much more painful and more powerful; he used words. He would yell at us for things that weren't our fault—things that we had no control over. He was especially hard on my older sister, Katie.

"Katie, why don't you have any friends around our house? Why do all of your friends live on the other side of town by your mother's house?"

"But Dad," I would try to defend my older sister, "there are no girls her age around here."

"How would she know? She's never tried to find any."

"I've been out and around the neighborhood with my friends, and I've never seen any."

"I wasn't talking to you anyway, Kristi. I was talking to your sister."

If he wasn't bugging her about friends, he would yell at us for some action our mother had taken which didn't even involve us. What were we supposed to do about our mother's actions? My mother made me realize, however, that these words were not his; my father didn't mean what he said. I realized for the first time that I wasn't bad; he just didn't know what he was doing.

A short time after I found out about my father's alcoholism, I started asking my sister about it. I found out that she had known all along. I was the only member of the family unaware of what was going on. Everyone had assumed that I knew, since everyone else did. They didn't realize that I was too young at the time my father went through rehabilitation to understand.

I was also too young to have seen the change. My brother and sister both remembered a time when they were very close to my father, before the alcoholism



set in. My brother remembered his early morning drives to 5 a.m. swim practices, and my sister remembered the trips to the doughnut store. While they had fond memories of the good times, I had only blankness. They knew what he was like sober, and how alcoholism changed him. I suppose that in this sense it was easier for them to understand that it was not him they should be angry with, but the alcoholism.

When I was ten years old, I stopped living with my father. I found, however, that this did not make the pain go away. I often wondered why my mother ever let us live at his house after the divorce. I thought that if I had never been exposed to my father's alcoholism, then I would never have been hurt by it. I thought that, if he would just stop drinking, everything would be all right.

I never fully understood my father's problem until high school. It was then that I started attending AlAnon meetings, a peer counseling group for teenagers affected by alcoholism. There I learned the power of my father's disease. Alcoholism was not just my father's problem; it was our family's problem. Even if I had never lived with my father, I would have been affected by the disease of alcoholism.

Alcoholism is a disease that affects entire families because each member must adapt his or her behavior to compensate for the weakness of the alcoholic. My mother, for example, was the enabler. She enabled my father to drink by covering up for him when he got calls from clients at night after he was drunk or passed out in bed. She also became very self-sacrificing, always ignoring her own needs and concentrating on those of my father. By following her role model, I could have eventually acquired the characteristics of an enabler without realizing that it was wrong. I was vulnerable to marrying another alcoholic because he would provide me with the same lifestyle I had always experienced in my own family. This may partially explain the attraction between my parents who both grew up in families with alcoholic fathers.

I also learned that I had to give up thinking that some day my father would quit drinking and that we could finally get to know each other. He had tried quitting many times before I went to AlAnon. Each time I would envision him transforming into another person and becoming the father I had always wished to know. Each time he eventually returned to drinking and each time my bitterness towards him grew. My father may never be able to conquer alcohol. The more I hope, the more it will continue to hurt me.

Although I feel sorry for my father, I never pity myself for having to deal with his alcoholism. In order to leave the hurt and pain behind, I was forced to take a closer look at myself. I began searching for what I really wanted out of life and what it would take to attain this. I discovered an inner strength and pride in myself that would never let anyone make me feel ashamed. I was a good person despite what my father or anyone else might have said. Words could only hurt if I believed in them. I gained an independence and self-confidence that could not



be deterred because I believed in myself. As long as I could look myself in the mirror every day and know that I was a good person, then it didn't matter what those around me thought.



## Eurocentrism in America: A Study of the Skyscraper

*Christopher Girr*

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the rapid creation of the revolutionary new building form called “skyscraper” both delighted and disturbed American architects and critics. From its beginnings in Chicago, the tall building was the focus of architectural attention in America. Its bold and pragmatic nature was impressive to all, but its non-historical aesthetic was considered vulgar and inappropriate by Eurocentric Easterners. Public acceptance of this new breed of tall building lay not with its extreme height or use of modern materials, but with the modern aesthetic that was intrinsic to both. In their search for a new American style of architecture based on European precedent, many critics and architects overlooked the appropriateness of the Chicago Style as an aesthetic solution. Strong Eurocentric bias emanating from the East caused many to ignore the purely original style created in America, by Americans, out of American needs. These architects and critics hoped a national style would simply evolve from their re-use of European architectural models. Only after Modernism, as a movement, took hold in Europe did it become acceptable to the American bourgeoisie.

Chicago exemplified the American ideal, beginning as a frontier town emerging from the commerce of the rapidly growing country. Chicago ballooned, like many American cities in the late nineteenth century, due to the developing rail system and other technological advances. A concerted and industrious effort to rebuild Chicago after the disastrous fire of 1871 proved successful, further representing the triumph of the American spirit. Wooden buildings were outlawed, while the skyrocketing price of land made low buildings financially impractical. Chicago had no formal architectural traditions or established culture to build upon, and few ties to Europe. It had left the aristocracy of cities such as New York and Boston behind. Its architects were young men who were for the most part free of the academic training and Eurocentrism that influenced many Eastern architects. They acted independently of European standards of good taste, utilizing modern engineering materials and methods to create a new American architecture of commerce. The skyscraper was as pragmatic and bold a building as Chicago was a city or America a country. The new style suited America, but New York’s influential society deemed its newness inappropriate.

In New York, where the making of money was not so much an end in itself as the means toward an end, business buildings were likely to look like



apologies for the industrial revolution rather than advertisements of our technological progress.<sup>1</sup>

Not so in Chicago, whose buildings were monuments to the business civilization at work. The Chicago millionaires' devotion to business freed them from the constraints of tradition; they were impressed by the power and pragmatism the skyscraper displayed. Chicago's architects were convinced that the new technology and the need for vertical office space would create a new urban architectural form. Louis Sullivan, credited with giving form to the skyscraper, argued against the use of historical elements in determining the aesthetic of the skyscraper. In his essay "The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered," Sullivan described how new kinds of buildings required new kinds of architectural expression; he proclaimed that the skyscraper

must be tall, every inch of it tall. The force and power of altitude must be in it, the glory and pride of exaltation must be in it. It must be every inch a proud and soaring thing, rising in sheer exaltation that from bottom to top it is a unit without a single dissenting line.<sup>2</sup>

Sullivan recognized the need to abandon traditional architectural styles and to invent a new aesthetic for the tall building. This modern aesthetic expressed verticality through a tripartite, essentially classical, organization and was detailed with organically derived ornament. His vision of a modern style differed from the later European Modernists in that the Europeans proclaimed an ornament-free massing of geometric forms. Sullivan's Wainwright Building of 1891 was a rich and successful solution to the aesthetics of the skyscraper; a solution open to more possibilities than the towering glass box which was to come. In 1891, however, Sullivan's non-historical style was far from popular with many critics and architects, and farther still from achieving acceptance as the basis of a national style. Many even considered the tall office building unworthy of the label *architecture* due to its shocking newness, purely commercial function, and lack of proper style.

At the turn of the century, style was conceived of as the particular elaborated appearance of a building, which in turn was assumed to be based on traditional styles. Style was equated with aesthetic quality and beauty itself was conventionally defined as embellishment, preferably derived from approbated historical sources. Therefore, it was originally assumed that the American style would develop in accordance with precedent and not in defiance of it.<sup>3</sup>



The “Chicago style,” pioneered by Sullivan and his contemporaries, was untraditional, and therefore not regarded as a suitable architectural aesthetic. The tall building defied precedent; it represented the modern age. Although the skyscraper had a distinct and impressive Americanness to it, America still looked to Europe for architectural direction and approval. Ironically, the skyscraper was seen not as a vehicle to achieve architectural identity, but as an unwelcome intruder into the quest for it.

Although bourgeois America did not realize the appropriateness of the Chicago style to its architectural identity problem, it was equally unsatisfied with its stock of European replicas. In 1890, the general assessment of the state of American architecture was condemnatory. It was dominated by the undisciplined use of a variety of styles and the direct copying of European models. The architect Robert Peabody explained: “We have doubtless seen a great deal of ostentation and vulgarity built into more or less permanent form, and doubtless we are very far from having produced great works of architecture.”<sup>4</sup> Thomas Hastings, an eminent Beaux-Arts architect in America, asked a popular question in the late nineteenth century, “Why should we not have one characteristic style, expressing the spirit of our own life?”<sup>5</sup> Contemporaries strongly believed that a nation’s architecture expressed its unique character as well as embodied its achievement and greatness. Deeply rooted nineteenth-century historicist attitudes were based in the belief that every great civilization has produced a characteristic and valuable architecture. “But in our time,” observed Hastings in 1894, “contrary to all historic precedent, there is a confusing variety of styles.”<sup>6</sup>

This was indeed the case. A year earlier, the World’s Columbian Exposition at Chicago had displayed “American wealth and progress” through a grand display of classically based Renaissance style buildings. For some critics, the coherent unity, style, and dignity of the Fair relieved them of their anxieties about the state of American architecture. Many who reacted positively to the Fair hoped it would serve as a model for reform of the past excesses of unchecked eclecticism.<sup>7</sup> Others, most notably Louis Sullivan and his contemporaries, saw the Fair as a serious regression, adding to the jumbled bank of American eclecticism and more importantly retarding the evolution and acceptance of the non-historical style already begun in Chicago’s early skyscrapers.

Although the classical dignity and aesthetic unity of the Fair was seen by many Americans as a proper stepping stone in the development of an American style, the architectural example of the Fair seemed irrelevant to the treatment of the new creation, the tall office building. Critics reluctantly acknowledged that a style which could not accommodate the skyscraper “would not express the fullness of the American genius.” The critic Russell Sturgis concluded of the skyscraper that

in very many designs... the old styles simply do not apply to us, and we are compelled to disregard them. Many modern requirements are absolutely



opposed to the pursuit of design according to the old principles. Many modern materials and methods of building, important and not to be disregarded, compel the introduction of new forms and new combinations.<sup>8</sup>

This statement, like countless others from the early twentieth century, calls for the introduction of a new style of architecture. Unfortunately, instead of realizing that it had already begun in Chicago's Loop, it seems to have been popular belief that a suitable national style would emerge from the continued employment of historically-based eclecticism. It was hoped that the elusive new style would evolve from a more proficient and sophisticated use of eclecticism.

Ernest Flagg, designer of New York's Singer Building, was hopeful of the eventual appearance of such a style based on "the particular process of development which works everywhere else." He defined it as "a slow system of evolution from what has gone before."<sup>9</sup> These and other vague and passive statements seemed to make the most sense to a self-conscious and remarkably Eurocentric America. Unwilling to take the architectural reins when Chicago's designers handed them to her, America proved the "colonial complex" was alive and well. Classical and Gothic stylistic variations dominated the first decades of the new century. The verticality of Gothic forms was seen by some as particularly suitable for the tall building. Much of America saw eclecticism as the logical link between past and future. Columbia professor A.D.F. Hamlin drew a parallel between the modern adaption of the Gothic style to the skyscraper and the Romans' adaption of Greek forms to arched and vaulted structures.<sup>10</sup> The Gothic style was executed most successfully in Cass Gilbert's Woolworth Building in New York. It was hailed as *the cathedral of commerce* because of its church-like massing and purely commercial function.

As Modernism and the International Style blossomed in Germany and France, America still seemed hesitant. The most revealing study of America's architectural taste can be seen in the *Chicago Tribune* Tower Competition of 1922. By means of an international architectural competition, the newspaper sought "to erect the most beautiful and distinctive office building in the world." Architects from the U.S. and abroad entered the competition, submitting designs in every conceivable style, both modern and historic. The winning design, by the American firm of Howells and Hood, was a powerful Gothic design containing fragments of European relics embedded in the facade. European critics pointed out that Americans were losing their faith, treating Chicago's noble heritage carelessly. As noted by Sigfried Giedion, author of *Space, Time, and Architecture*, a few bold European entries were much more faithful to the principles of the Chicago school than any American entry.<sup>11</sup> As European influence had dictated style in the past, so it would again. Eliel Saarinen of Finland had placed second in the Tribune competition with what the jury considered to be the only worthy foreign entry. They described



the modern design as displaying “such unusual beauty,” and “such a remarkable understanding of the requirements of an American office building as to compel its being awarded second place.” Many critics and architects agreed that it was superior to the winning entry because of its “original non-historical design.”<sup>12</sup> A critic for the *Architectural Record* wrote

We are confident that the second prize design will have such an effect upon our designers, coming at a critical time as it does, when we are thoroughly “fed up” with the old method of “dressing” our steel buildings, that through its influence will be born a really distinctive, a truly American architecture.”<sup>13</sup>

Subsequent American skyscraper development was influenced by Saarinen, but more importantly by the growing influence of European Modernism as a movement on the still Eurocentric American society. Raymond Hood’s immediate switch from the Gothic style (which won him the *Tribune*) to his sleek Radiator Building in New York showed the power of the European influence. Twenty years earlier Louis Sullivan’s original skyscraper designs in Chicago were viewed as unsuitable anomalies, whereas the Finnish architect Saarinen would lead the way to a truly American style with one unbuilt design. Sullivan’s remarkable prescience in the development of the Modern style should be recognized.

Although the noble roots of the Modern style can be traced to Chicago’s early business buildings, America craved the approval of European society before it would embrace a modern aesthetic. America seemed to be waiting for the next fashionable European architectural movement so she could follow the lead. Evolving out the requirements of commerce and not high culture, the bold and pragmatic forms in Chicago’s Loop were admired by the avant-garde European Modernists. Only after European architects praised the functional purity of factories and condemned ornament and craftsmanship did America acknowledge that the European Modern style was the appropriate solution to her architectural problems. America abandoned the richness of the Chicago School for the spare and unfulfilled ideals of the International Style.



### Endnotes

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13. Deborah Polinski, *The Development of the American Modern Style*, p. 46.



## I. Introduction:

A great number of critics and readers of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea* have much discontent with the novel. There are two main reasons for this discontent. The first is that because *Nausea* is based on a very complex philosophy, the novel itself is quite difficult to understand. As a result, many readers become lost in the difficulties of the novel and never become aware of what Sartre is attempting to say. The second factor in readers' discontent is that many readers of *Nausea* feel that there are serious problems and inconsistencies between the novel and Sartre's own philosophy, especially in the novel's conclusion. Both of these problems are based on a misunderstanding of Sartre, however. *Nausea* incorporates a great deal of Sartre's philosophy, and one could never be expected to fully grasp what Sartre hopes to evoke in *Nausea*'s readers unless the readers have some sort of understanding of Sartre's notions of human existence. Sartre is a very difficult philosopher to understand and many of his points seem quite ambiguous. However, he is not a complete pessimist who finds no meaning in life, as one might suppose.

These are the problems that I will address in this essay. I hope, in some way, to alleviate the problems that critics find with Sartre and his novel *Nausea*. I will explore the novel's main assertions, illuminating complex points with explanations given through his philosophy in *Being and Nothingness*. I will then move on to the novel's conclusion, in order to illustrate that the conclusion is not at all irreconcilable with Sartre's philosophy or the novel itself.

## II. Becoming Infected with the *Nausea*:

Antoine Roquentin, the "hero" of *Nausea*, writes in his diary:

A change has taken place during these last few weeks...I think I'm the one who has changed: that's the simplest solution. Also the most unpleasant...I am subject to these sudden transformations...What has happened inside of me has not left any clear traces. saw something which disgusted me...Now I see: I recall better what I felt the other day at the seashore when I held the pebble. It was sort of *sweetish sickness*. How unpleasant it was! It came from the stone, I'm sure of it, it passed from the stone to my hand...a sort of nausea in the hands.<sup>1</sup>



At this point in the novel, it is unclear exactly what the nausea is. Roquentin says such things as "I am no longer free, I can no longer do what I will", and "Objects should not touch because they are not alive. You use them, put them back in place, you live among them. But they touch me, it is unbearable. I am afraid of being in contact with them as though they were living beasts."<sup>2</sup> It is not until halfway through the book that Roquentin himself, and therefore the reader, realizes what it is. He states: "it has pounced on me, it flows through me, I am filled with it. Existence, liberated, detached, floods over me. I exist."<sup>3</sup> This is it, the nausea, the knowledge of existence. The explanation of nausea is limited in the novel, however. None of the philosophy explaining how and why this occurs is discussed, for Roquentin does not fully understand it himself. For this reason, it is important to turn to *Being and Nothingness*, in order to see Sartre's full illustration of the nausea, and its philosophical explanation.

By the time that nausea is introduced in *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre has already explained much of the terminology that is imperative to understanding his philosophy. Two terms of great importance are that of the *In-itself* and the *For-itself*. The *In-itself* refers to the objects of consciousness, which simply are. They are unchangeable and incapable of movement, are unjustified and meaningless, and are a threat to us because we have no control over them. The *For-itself* is the consciousness which perceives the objects of the *In-itself*, and can change, evolve and question itself. The two can be distinguished by stating, simply speaking, that my body is *In-itself*, whereas I, my thinking self, am *For-itself*. Nausea is that which "perpetually reveals my body to my consciousness."<sup>4</sup> Roquentin feels the nausea once his consciousness realizes that its perfection is ruined by a disgusting physical body. And the two, the *In-itself* and the *For-itself* are never to be reconciled in human existence. As Sartre explains: "The being of human reality is suffering because it rises in being as perpetually haunted by a totality which it is without being able to be it, precisely because it could not attain the *In-itself* without losing the *For-itself*. Human reality is therefore by nature an unhappy consciousness with no possibility of surpassing its unhappy state."<sup>5</sup>

We must now understand how one becomes infected with the nausea. Sartre explains this through his use of the term the "slimy." In order to understand Sartre's use of the "slimy", another two of Sartre's philosophical terms must be explicated. One of these terms is facticity. Facticity is the *For-itself's* necessary connection with the *In-itself*, with the world and its own past. It is what allows us to say that the *For-itself* is or exists. The other term, contingency, is what in the *For-itself* equals facticity; the brute fact of being this *For-itself* in the world.<sup>6</sup> In the following passage, Sartre explains the "slimy":

A handshake, a smile, a thought, a feeling can be slimy...From the first appearance of the slimy, this sliminess is already a response to a demand, already a bestowal of self; the slimy appears as already the outline of a



fusion of the world with myself...the slimy lets itself be apprehended as that which I lack...that is, which offers itself as a rubric for classifying all the "thises" in organizations...In its own way, it symbolizes being...Only at the very moment when I believe I possess it, behold by a curious reversal, it possesses me...the *For-itself* is suddenly compromised...At this instant I suddenly understand the snare of the slimy: it is a fluidity which holds and compromises me; it clings to me like a leech.<sup>7</sup>

Now we may see how Roquentin felt upon picking up the pebble. He experiences physical disgust with the pebble's lack of meaning. Soon, Roquentin sees this lack of justification in everything, including his own life. Nothing is necessary. It is all contingent and has been given to us gratuitously, by chance, for no reason. Sartre calls the slime "a trap", and says that "slime is the revenge of the *In-itself*." This is a "sickly, sweet, feminine revenge...This is why the sugar-like sweetness, which remains indefinitely in the mouth—perfectly completes the essence of the slimy...it symbolizes the sugary death of the *For-itself*."<sup>8</sup> This explains that "sweetish sickness" felt by Roquentin when he first realizes that he has the Nausea. Throughout the book, Roquentin tastes this "sugar" in the air when the Nausea hits him. He relates: "Again, silence—the taste of sugar in the air at the back of my throat."<sup>9</sup> Sartre says that the slimy is "like the haunting memory of a metamorphosis."<sup>10</sup> And it is, as in the case of Roquentin; he has changed. Sartre also tells us that the slimy

is an ideal being which I reject with all my strength and which haunts my being, an ideal being in which the foundationless *In-itself* has priority over the *For-itself*. We shall call it anti-value...Henceforth for the *For-itself* there appears a new danger, a threatening mode of being which must be avoided, a concrete category which it will discover everywhere...each time that an object will manifest to me this relation of being, whether it is a matter of a handshake, of a smile, or of a thought, it will be apprehended by definition of slimy.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, each time Roquentin apprehends an object, such as his hand, or his glass of beer, he finds no meaning in its existence, and he finds it to be slimy. This also becomes the case with his own existence, after Roquentin realizes what the Nausea is.

### III. Existence Precedes Essence—Humanity Is Created by Mistake:

Sartre illustrates the fact that once the *For-itself* becomes manifested by the *In-itself*, everything is taken as antivalue; contingency takes over, and we realize that nothing has any value, and that its existence is meaningless. While Roquentin first finds this meaninglessness only in objects, he soon realizes that this is the



case with his own existence as well. Roquentin states "And it was true, I had always realized it; I hadn't the right to exist. I had appeared by chance, I existed like a stone, a plant, or a microbe."<sup>12</sup> Existence is only an inescapable fact in which Roquentin realizes there is no reason for "being here." Man is thrown into the world, devoid of any choice or purpose, and although he may realize this, there is still no way of escaping existence. There is no essence, no necessity or explanation for existing. Man simply is. Roquentin clarifies this point when he discovers in full of what the Nausea consists:

So this is the Nausea: this blinding evidence?...Now I know: I exist-the world exists- and I know that the world exists. That's all. It makes no difference to me. It's strange that everything makes so little difference to me: it frightens me. Ever since the day...I was going to throw the pebble, I looked at it and it all began: I felt that it existed. Then after that there were other Nauseas; from time to time objects start existing in your hand.<sup>13</sup>

The revelation of the contingency of existence makes Roquentin frightened, agonized, disgusted and angry. Yet there is nothing that he can do; he cannot cease to exist. Roquentin states: "Everything existing is born without reason, prolongs itself out of weakness and dies by chance...existence is a fullness which man can never abandon."<sup>14</sup> Roquentin feels that he is completely alone in the world in this revelation. And he is; yet Roquentin does not understand that this solitude will allow him to be free, freer than he ever thought he could be; free to construct values, give sense to an absurd world, and to create his own purposes, even those purposes for himself. The problem is that Roquentin envisions freedom in a negative light. Roquentin asserts: "No one has any rights; they are entirely free, like other men, they cannot succeed in feeling superfluous."<sup>15</sup> Seen in this way, this freedom is especially frightening, because there are no constraints upon it. Man can actually do anything that he wants, and not only can he, but he is obliged to do so. Man has not chosen to exist or to have this freedom, but we have received these "benefits" gratuitously, and are therefore obliged to act upon them. Man's first normal reaction is to attempt fleeing this freedom, exploring the ways to escape. Such is the case with Roquentin.

#### IV. The Realization of an Inescapable Freedom:

Brian Masters, in a study on Sartre, explains the reasoning of an escape from freedom.

Afraid of the yawning emptiness which Freedom implies, they [man] try at all costs to pretend that they are not free, that they are not abandoned and alone in a meaningless world...through fear, [he] attempts to mask his freedom, elude the personal effort which must be required to give meaning



to the world, and make of himself as fixed and rigidly determined an entity as the immutable things which surround him. By denying that he is free, he evades the unpleasant responsibility of having to do anything; he can remain safe in the belief that he is because he has always been so...he can only obey the rules.<sup>16</sup>

This escape from freedom includes many methods. Masters describes some of these attempts at escaping freedom. The first method of escape is entitled *Les Comedies Humaines*, the Human Comedy, which consists of an attempt to attach importance to the banality of everyday life. The second method, *Le Passe*, involves living one's life according to the past. The third method, *L'Autrui*, is an attempt to live according to the image of others. Finally are the theoretic systems such as Humanism or Aestheticism, in which people lose themselves within these theoretical ways of life.<sup>17</sup> Roquentin encounters many of these traditional escape routes, yet each attempt to live in these ways ultimately ends in his rejection of them. Roquentin's rejection actually saves him in that he only explores these options, never actually adopts them.

In order to understand why Roquentin is saved because he only explores these options, we must turn to Roquentin's encounters in the novel. We first catch a glimpse of these encounters in the case of the bourgeois. The bourgeois offer Roquentin the prospect of living the life of *les comedies humaines* and *l'autrui*. Roquentin looks down upon the bourgeois with contempt because he sees that he is unlike them, and cannot live as they do with their inauthentic "*divertissements*." Upon this realization, Roquentin explores many aesthetic options; attempting to make his life into an art form; beautiful, heroic, and picturesque. The first of Roquentin's options is an aesthetic meditation in the form of adventures. Roquentin decides that an adventure is just the thing that he needs in order to escape his nausea. He soon realizes, however, that there can be no adventures, for "for the most banal even to become an adventure, you must begin to recount it. This is what fools people: a man is always a teller of tales, he lives surrounded by his stories and the stories; he tries to live his own life as if he were telling a story."<sup>18</sup> Roquentin's realization that this could never help him to escape freedom is reinstated by Anny's visit, when she tells him that although she has tried to live her life by perfect moments, moments that form a novelesque existence, there truly aren't any. Humanism then becomes a prospect when Roquentin meets the Self-Taught Man, but Roquentin soon realizes that this theoretical approach is just as artificial as the lifestyle of the bourgeois. Roquentin turns to other aesthetic options, such as going to the museum, living in the past, and writing a history book, yet these options are all in vain as well. Roquentin's last hope is love, which consistently runs throughout the novel even after all other options are discarded, only because Roquentin is to meet his old girlfriend and only "love" in his life. Yet this option ends up destroying itself as well, and Roquentin finally decides



that he will never escape his freedom, and instead uses this freedom to leave Bouville for Paris. It is on his day of departure that he comes up with his only true possibility for placing meaning in his life. This possibility is that of writing a novel. This is yet another aesthetic solution, but is somehow different. This is also the point where critics have a field day in stating that Sartre's conclusion is completely inconsistent with his beliefs. To explore why there lies such a difference in this possibility, we must turn to the only factor which makes Roquentin somewhat of a happy man in the midst of his Nausea. Roquentin's sole saving grace during his nausea and meaninglessness is the song *Some of These Days*, which Roquentin hears almost every time that he sits in the cafe which he frequents often.

### V. The Possible Aesthetic Solution:

While listening to the song for the last time, before his departure from Bouville, Roquentin wonders at the end of his diary:

Couldn't I try...in another medium?...It would have to be a book...I don't quite know which kind—but you would have to guess, behind the printed words, behind the pages, at something which would not exist, which would be above existence...It would have to be beautiful and hard as *steel* and make people ashamed of their existence.<sup>19</sup>

Roquentin's reaction to the first time he hears the song is especially pertinent to his exploration of this possibility to place some type of meaning in his life. About this experience, Roquentin says:

For the moment that the jazz is playing; there is no melody, only notes, a myriad of tiny jolts. They know no rest, an inflexible order gives birth to them and destroys them without even giving them time to recuperate and exist for themselves...I would like to hold them back, but I know if I succeeded in stopping one it would remain between my fingers only as a raffish languishing sound. I must accept their death, I must even will it...I grow warm, I begin to feel happy. There is nothing extraordinary in this, it is a small happiness of Nausea...There is another happiness: outside there is this band of *steel*, the narrow duration of music which traverses our time through and through...The voice dies away and disappears. Nothing bites on the ribbons of *steel*...<sup>20</sup>

Through the illustration of both his book and the song with the use of the word *steel*, we may see that there exists a relationship between the two. Later, Roquentin states: "When the voice was heard in the silence, I felt my body harden and the nausea vanish. Suddenly it was unbearable to become so *hard*, so brilliant."<sup>21</sup> This



word too draws a parallel between the song and his hope for a book. By the end of the book, a clear parallel is drawn, for it is only through the song that Roquentin realizes what he wants to do with his life.

I think of the man out there who wrote this tune, one day in July, in the black heat of his room. I try to think of him through the melody...He made it. He has troubles, everything didn't work out for him the way it should have...There is nothing pretty or glorious in all that. But when I hear the sound and I think that man made it, I find this suffering and sweat...moving. He was lucky. He couldn't have realized it...Well, this is the first time in years that a man has seemed moving to me...The negress sings...They are like dead poeple for me, a little like the heroes of a novel; they have washed themselves of the sin of existing.<sup>22</sup>

And this is when Roquentin realizes that he may be able to create something that makes him feel the way that the song does. He suggests the writing of a novel to himself and asserts:

A novel. And there would be people who would read this book and say: "Antoine Roquentin wrote it, a red-headed man who hung around cafes," and they would think about my life as I think about the Negress's: as something precious and almost legendary.<sup>23</sup>

Roquentin finds this to be a serious possibility. He is not unlike the man who wrote the song; he had troubles too, and could not have realized the importance of his creation, yet he **succeeded**. And Roquentin thinks he too may succeed. He asserts:

Naturally, at first it would only be a troublesome, tiring work, it wouldn't stop me from existing or feeling that I exist. But a time would come when the book would be written, when it would be behind me, and I think that a little of its clarity might fall over my past.<sup>24</sup>

Critics have suggested that this has no bearing on the ending of the novel; that the possibility that Roquentin proposes is exactly that—a possibility, and that the writing of a novel is just another form of escape for Roquentin. However, again, this must be examined in light of the song that affects Roquentin so greatly. The song is "charmed, outside of existence"<sup>25</sup> and Roquentin hopes to be able to do the same with his novel. He is not attempting to escape existence, or even the thought of existing, as illustrated through the last quotation. He is merely exploring another possibility which would allow him to justify his existence. Terry Keefe is a good representative of this idea. He states: "rather than claiming that his own



existence is justified by reference to certain preexisting samples of Being, he would actually be consciously bringing something—a work of art—into Being.”<sup>26</sup> This is also exactly the case with the song: “What ‘saves’ these two [the song writer and the Negress] is not that their lives are transformed within the song, but that they are both, in their different ways, involved in the creation of an ideal object, of an instance of Being as opposed to existence.”<sup>27</sup> Not only is the song “outside existence”, but it also has another property; that of being immortal. Roquentin says that the song “filled the room with its metallic transparency, crushing our miserable time against the walls.”<sup>28</sup> He also says:

But behind the existence which falls from one present to another, without a past, without a future, behind those sounds which decompose from day to day, peel off and slip towards death, the melody stays the same, young and firm, like a pitiless witness.<sup>29</sup>

And this is the other feature of the music which Roquentin hopes to encompass in the novel. He wants to create something immortal, that will withstand the trials of time; “pitiless,” in that it will be as “hard as steel, and make people ashamed of their existence.” His want for writing the book includes the desire “to drive existence out of [him], to rid the passing moments of their fat, to twist them, dry them, purify [him]self, harden [him]self, to give back at last the sharp, precise sound of a saxophone note,”<sup>30</sup> yet this is not an escape, but what immortality is: preserving something which will always remain an ideal thing, without the superfluousness that existence has. He says that the music “spins gaily, completely self-absorbed; like a scythe it has cut through the drab intimacy of the world and now it spins on all of us.”<sup>31</sup> This also parallels what Roquentin wants to do with his book. It must be “hard as steel”, like a scythe, and “spin on all of us” in order to “make people ashamed of their existence.”

These two features, the immortality of the music, and its charmed nature, being outside of existence, are what Roquentin realizes must be included in his book, if it is to have the power that he desires. The inconsistency in the time frames of the diary and the actual 1932 calendar present another benefit for Roquentin that the critics seem to leave out. Roquentin’s realization comes on the twenty-ninth of February, a day out of the constraints of both time and existence. In this way, in occurring on this day, his revelation, as is the day, is somewhat immortal, or at least atemporal. From the first time that he hears the song to his last revelation, Roquentin admires the song because it strips away existence. He states:

The voice, deep and hoarse, suddenly appears and the world vanishes, the world of existence. A woman in the flesh had this voice, she sang in front of a record, in her finest get up, and they recorded her voice. The woman: bah! she existed like me...But there it is. You can’t say she exists. The



turning record exists, the air struck by the voice which vibrates, exists, the voice which made an impression on the record existed. I who listen, I exist. All is full, existence is everywhere, dense, heavy and sweet. But beyond all this sweetness, inaccessible, near and so far, young, merciless and serene, there it is...this rigour.<sup>32</sup>

By coming to his realization on this immortal day, which is outside of both the constraints of time and existence, Roquentin's realization becomes immortal. Even if he does not write the novel, he will have succeeded in finding justification for his life. Upon hearing the song, and coming to his revelation, Roquentin asks himself: "Can you justify your own existence then?"<sup>33</sup> And the answer is yes. He has found the way to making life worthwhile, by creating a possibility for himself. And not only is his realization immortal in his own mind, since he came to it on that unconstrained day, but the diary was published, as well, making his revelation immortal to all time.

I believe that Roquentin not only succeeded in his realization, but also in writing the novel. The "Editor's Note" in the beginning of the novel suggests that Roquentin is already dead. Regarding this note, it seems that he is already known, or had already written something, for it is appropriate that someone's diary be published, only if they were famous. And perhaps this is what Sartre is suggesting in the quotation made by Roquentin in which he reveals his hope that "some clarity may fall over his past". The book which only exists as a possibility in Roquentin's diary may have already been written, and perhaps this diary is published in order to "clarify" his other book, his "past", in which he came to his revelations. The diary would then serve to justify Roquentin's realizations, helping the readers of his other novel to have a foundation for their having become "ashamed of their existence".

## VI. Conclusion:

While critics have reproached Sartre for his "aesthetic solution" in the end of the book, stating that his solution is incompatible with his philosophy, and that Roquentin will never succeed, I believe that the underlying reasons for this solution are not only consistent, but dependant on Sartre's philosophy. Whether Roquentin has written the novel or not is unimportant in deciphering whether he has succeeded or not, for he succeeds no matter what perspective one takes, through both his realization, and if there is a final product. To Sartre, one can never be happy after becoming infected with the nausea. Finding justification in one's life after experiencing the nausea is the most difficult and the most important part. And this is exactly what Roquentin plans to do.



## Endnotes

1. *Nausea*, Jean-Paul Sartre. New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1964., pp. 2, 4, & 10.
2. *Nausea*, p. 10.
3. *Nausea*, p. 98.
4. *Being and Nothingness*, Jean-Paul. New York: Washington Square Press, 1956., p. 445.
5. *Being and Nothingness*, p. 140.
6. *Being and Nothingness*, p. 801-802.
7. *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 773 & 775.
8. *Being and Nothingness*, p. 777.
9. *Nausea*, p. 20.
10. *Being and Nothingness*, p. 777.
11. *Being and Nothingness*, p. 779.
12. *Nausea*, p. 84.
13. *Nausea*, pp. 122 & 123.
14. *Nausea*, p. 133.
15. *Nausea*, p. 131.
16. *Sartre: A Study*, Brian Masters. New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1970., p. 19.
17. Masters, p. 21.
18. *Nausea*, p. 39.
19. *Nausea*, p. 178.
20. *Nausea*, p. 21.
21. *Nausea*, p. 22.
22. *Nausea*, p. 21.
23. *Nausea*, p. 22.
24. *Nausea*, p. 178.
25. *Critical Essays On Jean-Paul Sartre*, Robert Wilcocks. Boston: G. K. Hall and Company, 1988., p. 215
26. Wilcocks, p. 187.
27. Wilcocks, p. 191.
28. *Nausea*, p. 22.
29. *Nausea*, p. 176.
30. *Nausea*, p. 175.
31. *Nausea*, p. 174.
32. *Nausea*, pp. 102 & 103.
33. *Nausea*, p. 177.



## Can socialism and feminism be reconciled?

*Nora Beidler*

Feminism and socialism both share some similar objectives. Socialism, with its ideas for equality and the abolition of class oppression, is similar to the feminist ideals of gender equality and liberation from male dominance. Despite the apparent happiness of such a union, however, there is an inherent debate between the ideologies of Marxism and feminism. There are necessary and obvious conflicts between the two, even though their proponents fight for many of the same ideas. Both fight for the equality of all, against exploitation and the arbitrary assignment of wealth and leadership. But Marxism has long done this on the behalf of the worker, the exploited capitalist labor force, while feminism has argued for the equality of women specifically, in the work force and in the home. This paper will examine some of the issues brought up by this relationship between Marxism and feminism and try to arrive at a well-supported opinion on the debate. It attempts to negotiate the conflicts between socialism and feminism, concluding that in order for the two to stand side by side and achieve their common goals, socialism as an ideology must include the perspectives on gender that feminism has provided and adjust accordingly. The two can be reconciled, but the burden for resolution falls more heavily on socialism as the older, more established political ideology.

Problems are bound to arise between socialism and feminism. By concentrating so specifically on the interests of women, feminism could be called elitist or bourgeois. It could be accused of not putting the revolution first, of putting its own selfish interests before the interests of the anti-capitalist movement. Marxism has urged feminism to wait until the revolution is over, and when, and only when, we are all living in a socialist world free of capital, exploitation and personal property, will the needs of women be attended to.

Feminism, by contrast, sees problems in the Marxist way of thinking. It sees the dismissal of women as patriarchal, which is, by extension, capitalistic. A feminist perspective argues that in order to establish a true socialist state, the problem of patriarchy must first be dealt with, not left to some vague future time. It argues that the woman question is vitally important and not something to be put off or taken lightly, for to do so would not be socialist in itself.

Marxism is popular among exploited people of all types for its promises of a better, classless world and equality for all. Women, as an exploited and dominated class, are no different. Marxism, however, seems only to be fighting for the freedom of the oppressed working class male, and on closer inspection of the



aims of Marxism a refusal to take a stand on the woman question has been noted again and again. Marxism claims to be genderless, but in a world where patriarchy has long dominated, before Marxism or capitalism ever existed, the sex of the genderlessness is bound to be more male than female. Marxism does not take a stand on the issues of procreation and division of labor but rather sees women, through their biological differences, as logical procreators and workers in the home:

Marxism provides a clear acknowledgement of the social necessity of this woman's work. It recognizes explicitly the obvious fact that no society could continue without both consumption and procreation. In contrast with its close examination of production, however, Marxism does not provide much theoretical analysis of either of these two other aspects of social life, relying instead on an intuitive understanding of them. . . . this failure to look closely at reproduction, especially at procreation, deprives Marxism of the conceptual resources necessary to understanding women's oppression. Indeed, it actually obscures that oppression and so contributes to maintaining it. (Jaggar 1983:74)

Friedrich Engels wrote extensively on the origins of the sexual division of labor. He claimed that the nuclear family and its economic structure is the most basic form of subordination of women, that originally societies were matriarchal, and that patriarchy grew out of the economic development that went along with the first surpluses of property after the domestication of animals. From this sense of property ownership followed the male's desire to pass it on to his children, rather than to his sister's children as the then matriarchal system would have dictated. From that point, it followed that women would produce the next heirs, that men would control this production as they controlled their property, and that the nuclear family to become the standard means of doing so (Ferguson 1991:168).

Another part of traditional Marxist theory is the insistence that class oppression is the fundamental oppression. It urges women to join the fight against capitalism, and only after the revolution is finished will the needs of women be considered specifically. Ann Ferguson summarizes the problem this poses for feminists:

Should feminists accept the "unite and fight" strategy, advocated by many socialist groups, of joining with men to fight for socialism (the "class first" position)? Or, realizing that men as a sex class have an interest in maintaining male domination, should women insist on if not a separatist, then at least an autonomous, women's movement with its own goals and priorities? (1991:160)



Michele Barrett notes that Marxism has a distinct advantage over feminism in that there is an established body of theoretical work and an established political perspective (1985:37). Feminism, on the other hand, is a new discipline, with many proposed directions for its theoretical frameworks: "Marxist feminist theory is still at a relatively early stage in formulating a perspective which challenges, but benefits from, the more developed science of Marxism" (38). If Marxism and feminism are to have an equal partnership, Marxism must recognize this basic difference, recognize the possibilities of positive change, and work towards it.

Is feminism inherently anti-Marxist? Apparently so, according to traditional Marxism. Ann Ferguson examines the relationship between feminism and traditional Marxism. Marx and Engels felt that

any egalitarian reorganization of marriage and the family could only take place after a socialist revolution had occurred. They therefore dismissed socialist feminists who placed equal priority on the fight for gender equality and for socialism as either 'utopian' or else 'bourgeois feminists.' (Ferguson 1991:167)

Caroline Ramazanoglu reports that one of the major problems facing Marxist feminists today is the divisions among women. In Western societies, and in other cultures around the world, there are women who identify more with the men with whom they struggle for subsistence than the higher class women who have a hand in oppressing them (1993:26). Thus finding a feminist framework into which women from all classes and all cultures can identify is a formidable, if not impossible, task:

Marxist feminists are . . . in the contradictory situation of having a commitment to struggle for the interests of women as women, regardless of our class, power, or economic interests, while at the same time having a commitment to struggle for the interests of the exploited working class, which entails struggling with some men and against some women. (1993:14)

The problem, then, is a circular one. Women presumably must be in a relatively comfortable position in order to commit to a women's cause rather than a class or power-related cause. Feminism, then, is a luxury that some women cannot afford, as they may very well not feel any identity with women in a different class. In this way, the Marxist stance that the revolution should come first may be the best solution, for then when all women are at the same classless level they can object with unity to their domination by men. But this, too, is a problem, for breaking away from the male domination of Marxism will be seen as breaking away from Marxism itself. It is this vicious circle that needs to be changed.



Heidi Hartmann's famous essay, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism," argues that the marriage of feminism and Marxism is inherently problematic, that because of the patriarchy still in place in Marxism, it will impose its priorities onto feminism and the resulting partnership will be dominated by Marxism:

The "marriage" of Marxism and feminism has been like the marriage of husband and wife depicted in English common law: Marxism and feminism are one, and that one is Marxism. . . . The inequalities in this marriage, like most social phenomena, are no accident. Many Marxists typically argue that feminism is at best less important than class conflict and at worst divisive of the working class. (Sargent, ed., 1981:2).

She proposes a dual-systems theory that Marxism and feminism do need each other—and that women must use feminist analysis to focus on the problems of women, but also need Marxist analysis to understand the larger social and historical ideologies which have dominated them thus far. She argues for a "feminist socialism" in which both the struggle against capitalism and the struggle against patriarchy are equally important (Sargent, ed., 1981:33).

Alison Jaggar, by contrast, argues optimistically for a "socialist feminism" that is the combination of radical and traditional Marxist ideas. All differ in their views of how and why patriarchy is in place and their respective solutions for it. Socialist feminism "uses a feminist version of the Marxist method to provide feminist answers to feminist questions" (Jaggar 1983:124). It argues that the institution of patriarchy is too deeply intertwined with imperialism, capitalism, and racism to be separated, and that in order to fight any one of them, we must fight all of them (Jaggar 1983:124). While Marxism seeks to unite all people by class, and radical feminism seeks to unite women, regardless of class, Jaggar's socialist feminism makes the abolition of the sexual division of labor a high priority (132). She outlines the desirable ends for the socialist feminist struggle: equality in the public sphere and labor force, equality and shared responsibility in childbearing and childrearing, stigmas of various sexual preferences removed and made socially indifferent, and, ultimately, the complete transformation of human nature itself (1983:132).

Ann Ferguson looks at previous socialist revolutions and argues that feminism has been repeatedly shoved onto the back burner of the socialist struggle. She claims that socialism and feminism have been at odds and blames the socialist neglect of feminism on patriarchy:

Unfortunately . . . past socialist struggles have not ultimately centered on the necessity of feminism for socialism. Perhaps because the leaders of such struggles have been men, they have focused more on what the



socialist struggles had to offer women than what the feminist struggle had to offer socialists. (Ferguson 1991:160)

Ferguson argues that the feminist aim of gender equality must, by definition, also include the ideas of socialism (1991:161). She concedes that while previous socialist revolutions, such as in the Soviet Union and some in the third world, have not succeeded in creating complete gender equality, they have made improvements on women's situation, in areas of state-supported child care programs, national health care, public access to abortions and birth control, and marriage reforms (1991:163):

Thus previous socialist revolutions, though they have not in themselves been *sufficient* to eliminate patriarchy, were absolutely *necessary* first steps for women's liberation. (1991:163)

Ferguson also argues that feminism and socialism need each other to establish a "democratic socialism"—that feminism needs the socialist ideas of equality and class oppression, and socialism needs to be made gender-aware and also made aware of the situation of women in all societies before the true concepts of socialism can be made real: "A democratic socialist vision requires full gender equality, and an ideal feminist society requires the elimination of other social domination structures such as classism and racism, as well as the elimination of sexism" (1991:180).

Relevant to this discussion is the debate on how far patriarchy is embedded into all our present ideologies. If patriarchy is a capitalist construction, then fighting capitalism and winning would also entail a victory over patriarchy. But if patriarchy goes back further than capitalism, and further than socialism, then more drastic measures are required, namely a complete transformation of our perceptions of human nature. Sylvia Walby argues that "there are two class systems, one based around patriarchy, the other around capitalism" (1990:13), that both are intertwined, and that both need to be tackled both individually and each in relation to the other.

Azizah Al-Hibri, in her essay "Capitalism is an Advanced Stage of Patriarchy: But Marxism is not Feminism," takes a radical standpoint and argues that patriarchy is the most basic form of domination, because it was the first. The very first things men had to encounter in the world were women, and women's ability to reproduce and survive spontaneous bleeding (menstrual) made them almost magical to men, who wanted to be a part of the process, too. The forceful conversion of the reproductive process to the property of men, since they could not take part, has perpetrated their systematic domination of women ever since then. This is the largest problem, Al-Hibri claims. Capitalism is an advanced product of patriarchy since it continues the idea of personal property and ownership of



another's resources. Marxism is a correct positive response to the political aims of capitalism, but it only responds to the capitalist domination of the male worker (Sargent, ed., 1983:182). Al-Hibri argues that feminism can add the necessary, winning elements to the socialist struggle, and that feminists should join the socialist forces

despite their frequent antifeminist practices. For they are merely patriarchy devouring itself, weakening itself. Placed within the proper feminist strategy, these movements could usher in the beginning of the gradual defeat of the male principle of dominance. (Sargent, ed., 1983:190)

Ann Ferguson also questions why patriarchy has persisted even in socialist regimes that have promised the liberation of women and gender equality (1991:170). Her answer is that, because of the age-old practice of patriarchy, men have been the leaders of the socialist revolutions and that it is in their best interests to perpetuate existing conditions. The nuclear family, a patriarchal invention to keep women in the home, is the surest way to reproduce the next generation of revolutionaries. Economically, the continued unequal sexual division of labour contributes to increased socialist accumulation (Ferguson 1991:173).

Socialism and feminism—can they be reconciled? After considering the main points of conflict, the opinion of this author is yes, the two can be reconciled, but not without some hard work. Socialism, as the older brother, has more responsibility in making the partnership work. It is responsible for accepting feminist ideas of gender and accepting the fact that it has been severely lacking thus far in that area and in our swiftly changing world of the 1990's, women and feminism cannot be ignored any longer. Feminism would help modernize and genderize socialism, and as the last socialist societies come to an end, socialism obviously needs some help. Feminism would survive without socialism, but can socialism survive without feminism? This is the essential question, for though socialism is perhaps not a direct offspring of patriarchy as capitalism is, it has undeniably bought into and taken advantage of patriarchal ideas for its own advancement. If socialism can look ahead with the changing times and accept that feminism is necessary to its survival, then there is hope for a reconciliation.



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# An Investigation as to the Character of Minimalist Art

*Peter Schnore*

This essay will examine and evaluate the thesis laid out by contemporary art critic Michael Fried (and initially, his predecessor Clement Greenberg,) concerning the relationship of minimalism to modernist art. I will start with an examination of Greenberg's definition of the conditions determining modernist art, since this is the definition Fried uses. Next, I will examine how Fried differentiates minimalism from modernism. I will then end with my own explanation for the differences between the two. I believe that the trait of "presence" that Fried ascribes to minimalism is evidence that the power of the sublime, as described by Edmund Burke, is the reason for the human interest in these works of simple design.

## A Definition of Modernism

For reasons that are not altogether clear, Greenberg characterizes the modernist movement as being the self-criticism of art. In this self-criticism art becomes aware of its "area of competence"<sup>1</sup> and, naturally, "good" art is that which focuses its concerns within this area. The impetus for this self-criticism was rational examination much like that seen during the Enlightenment. This examination began in philosophy with Kant's logical criticism of logic, and through the nineteenth century was called on by all fields of social activity. To survive this rational "inquisition", each field had to "prove itself"; the arts had to demonstrate

that the kind of experience they provided was valuable in its own right and not to be obtained from any other activity.

Each art, it turned out, had to perform this demonstration on its own account. What had to be exhibited was not only that which was unique and irreducible in art in general, but also that which was unique and irreducible in each particular art. Each art had to determine, through its own operations and works the effects exclusive to itself. By doing so it would, to be sure, narrow its area of competence, but at the same time it would make its possession of that area all the more certain.<sup>2</sup>

Greenberg would have us believe that the reason that the arts steered themselves into modernism was either to survive rationalism by showing that they had intrinsic value that could not be attained through rational activity or by other



means, or to solidify their status in the world, to promote those characteristics that made them “arts” apart from anything else. Thus painting pursued the traits that that were characteristic of painting alone, two-dimensionality and literal shape. Or in other words, quite simply, a two-dimensional geometric form.

This short description of the modernist’s theory of the evolution of modernism seems to beg for criticism. Greenberg’s definition seems far-fetched to me. Greenberg points to David and Ingres as artists who were participants in the beginnings of modernism. When I look at their work, I simply see naturalism and three-dimensionality in the painted images, not any attempt to indicate the actual two-dimensionality of the material object, the flat linen canvas.

John Canady, for many years the highly respected art critic of the *New York Times*, has written the following concerning Ingres:

... classicalism in painting was dedicated to a revival of the intellectual purity and the moral force of ancient Greece and Rome as they were currently imagined by philosophers and aestheticians. But before long, classicalism degenerated into a fettering code of arbitrary rules and standards. By the middle of the century the demigod of the school was a pedantic tyrant and a great artist named Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres who mercilessly dictated these sterile recipes, yet rose above them in his own art.<sup>3</sup>

Canady states that there was a movement in nineteenth-century French painting of following “arbitrary rules and standards,” of “carefully controlled drawing,” and “limitation of color within sharply defined boundaries,”<sup>4</sup> but that consciously or unconsciously Ingres did not follow those rules himself. He goes as far to say that Ingres had much in common with the romantics (who regarded themselves as the true classicists).<sup>5</sup>

This example should serve to raise some doubts about Greenberg’s explanation of the beginnings of modernist painting. Greenberg, with 20/20 hindsight, had the opportunity to formulate or even invent an explanation. If we had been able to inquire of David and Ingres whether they were consciously attempting to save painting by defining its special characteristics, two-dimensionality and literal shape, how would they have replied?

### Fried's Differentiation Between Modernism and Minimalism

Keeping in mind Greenberg’s definition of modernist artwork, let us turn to Fried’s “Art and Objecthood” to examine the objections he has to minimalist art. The first point that Fried makes is that minimalism is not the same as modernist painting or modernist sculpture, but finds its place somewhere outside the two. It is



"...in relation both to modernist painting and modernist sculpture that [minimalist] art defines or locates the position it aspires to occupy... Specifically [minimalist] art conceives of itself as neither one or the other; on the contrary, it is motivated by specific reservations, or worse, about both; and it aspires, perhaps not exactly, or not immediately, to displace them, but in any case to establish itself as an independent art on a footing with either.<sup>6</sup>

This may seem unimportant at first glance, but remember: each art form had to "define its boundaries" so to speak, to survive the rationalists.

Fried then gives an account of the reasons given by the minimalists for their turning away from modernist painting and sculpture. Here is a quote from minimalist Donald Judd:

When you start relating parts, in the first place, you're assuming you have a vague whole - the rectangle of the canvas - and definite parts, which is all screwed up, because you should have a definite whole maybe and no parts, or very few.<sup>7</sup>

If, Judd seems to ask, the goal of painting is to limit itself to two-dimensionality and defining the shape, it would seem that the easiest thing to do would be to limit the subject of the painting to one form the same size as the painting! Anytime the painting contained more than one object it would detract from the two-dimensionality (i.e. one object/shape would inevitably seem to float above another) and allow the eye to visualize a form other than the literal shape. The perfect example of the complications that occur when two shapes are introduced would be found in Frank Stella's pieces containing two geometric objects. The invading shape seems to rise above or push below the invaded.

The only conceivable instance when shapes and objects might not be objectionable is when they emphasize or enhance the literal shape. The perfect example of this is Frank Stella's work, especially the aluminum stripe pieces. Each line, or each area between the lines, follows the strict guide of the literal shape of the whole piece, thereby enhancing that shape. We are reminded of the literal shape as many times as there are outlined objects.

I would like to note that this involves the risk of the reverse occurring. Two problems arise. First, the partitions may lead us to visualize the depicted shape as that which is most important, and the literal shape as something designed to lend support to it, the reverse of what was supposedly intended. Second, the partitioning of the literal shape created by Stella "fools the eye" into seeing a protruding or receding "step pyramid" thus turning the work into an op-art piece. This detracts from the two-dimensionality so important to modernist art. The safest bet, it seems, would be to stick to one congruent literal shape.



Fried continues with another objection to modernist painting put forward by the minimalists.

It [the establishment of the importance of literal shape] also establishes the rectangle as a definite form. It is no longer a fairly neutral limit. A form can be used in only so many ways. The rectangular plane is given a life span. The simplicity required to emphasize the rectangle limits the arrangements within it.<sup>9</sup>

Fried then adds, "The use of shaped rather than rectangular forms can, from the literalist point of view, merely prolong the agony."<sup>10</sup> In principle this is true: when one limits his options he has fewer choices. The more limitations one incurs, the fewer the possible variations in the theme. There is of course room for plenty of experimentation within the bounds of modernist art, although under such strict rules less and less new art will truly be new, or it will fail to meet the requirements of modernism. Therefore, we can reason that more and more art will simply be a regurgitation of past work, or "failures" (that is fail to meet the requirements laid out by Greenberg), or less and less modernist work will be produced.

Fried shows us that the minimalists feel much the same about modernist sculpture. Their main complaint is that it is "anthropomorphic". The minimalists describe their own work as

assert[ing] the values of wholeness, singleness, and invisibility - of a work's being, as nearly as possible, "one thing", a single "specific object". Morris devotes considerable attention to "the use of strong gestalt or unitary-type forms to avoid devisiveness"; where Judd is chiefly interested in the kind of wholeness that can be achieved through the repetition of identical units...for both Judd and Morris, the critical factor is shape. Morris's "unitary forms" are polyhedrons that resist being grasped other than as a single shape: The gestalt simply is the "constant, known shape."<sup>12</sup>

Fried notes:

Above all they are opposed to sculpture that, like most painting, is "made by part by addition, composed" and in which "specific elements...separate from the whole, thus setting up relationships within the work."<sup>13</sup>

I sense that the minimalist's dissatisfaction with modernist sculpture is that the blending or association of parts detracts from the aesthetic experience that the minimalists were interested in. This argument, that the power of the artwork rests in the gestalt of the shapes is an important one: it underscores my thesis as to the



attraction of pure minimalism. We will come back to it.

## Presence

The concept of the power of the solid form comes up in the second section of Fried's article. He cites a passage from Clement Greenberg's essay, "Recentness of Sculpture", mentioning that Greenberg discusses "...presence, which, from the start, has been associated with [minimalist] work."<sup>16</sup> In this paragraph he mentions Anne Truett, whose work shares the simplicity associated with minimalist work. Her work however does not have the untainted Gestalt quality of a large cube that we may associate with the work of Robert Morris or Tony Smith, nor the effect caused by a succession of identical objects that we see in Donald Judd's work.

Truett's art did flirt with the look of non-art, and her 1963 show was the first in which I noticed how this look could confer the effect of *presence*. That presence as achieved through size was aesthetically extraneous, I already knew. That presence as achieved through the look of non-art was likewise aesthetically extraneous, I did not yet know. Truett's sculpture had this kind of presence, but did not *hide* behind it. That sculpture could hide behind it—just as painting did—I found out only after repeated acquaintance with minimal works of art: Judd's, Morris's...minimal art can also hide behind presence as size: I think of Bladen... as well as some of the artists just mentioned.<sup>17</sup>

The key word in this paragraph is, of course, presence. Note that Greenberg attributes presence to two things: First, an artwork achieves presence through size; and second, it is achieved through the look of non-art. It is important to note that "presence...is aesthetically extraneous." I believe that he means that presence is "outside the realm of true art".

In the last half of section two and throughout section three Fried develops his thesis on the true and most meaningful difference between modernist and minimalist art.

His argument starts with the notion that presence is "...conferred by size or by the look of non-art.[That is, 'Objecthood']"<sup>18</sup> Let us put aside the issue of size for the time being and examine, with Fried, "the look of non-art." The definition of what is and is not a painting is not static; that is to say, the definition changes and is dependent upon the historical perspective of any given time. In our time, or at the time of Fried's writing, painting fit Greenberg's definition, which as I have stated includes the concepts of two-dimensionality and literal shape, or to put it another way, "...flatness and the delimitation of flatness".<sup>19</sup> Since we now consider this as our definition of a painting, a stretched canvas falls under the definition, and can be considered a painting. Since even an untouched canvas is a



painting and a painting is art, all stretched, untouched canvases are pieces of art. Those of an earlier era were not paintings; they were still just a piece of cloth on a piece of wood, just plain objects.

This means that if you are interested in examining the boundary between art and non-art these days, you had better look in the three-dimensional world of sculpture. "Painting had lost the lead because it was so ineluctably art, and now it devolved on sculpture or something like it to head art's advance."<sup>20</sup>

Fried now wishes to separate modernist sculpture from the look of non-art. He again cites Greenberg, who criticizes the lack of "art-ness" in minimalism.

The look of machinery is shunned [by the minimalists] now because it does not go far enough towards the look of non-art which is presumably an "inert" look that offers to the eye a minimum of "interesting" incident - unlike the machine look, which is arty by comparison (and when I think of Tinguely I would agree with this). Still, no matter how simple the object may be, there remain the relations and interrelations of surface, contour, and spatial interval. Minimal works are readable as art, as almost anything is today - including a door, a table, or a blank sheet of paper...yet it would seem that a kind of art nearer the condition of non-art could not be envisaged or ideated at this moment.<sup>21</sup>

I sense that Greenberg and Fried would be perfectly happy concluding that minimalism were not art at all, but simply the production of objects.

Two points are especially important to remember about the issue of presence. First, Greenberg uses the term to describe an *effect*. I will later show that this effect is a phenomenon caused by uniform gestalt shapes and uniform successions of objects we see in minimalist works of art. Second, presence is not dependent upon art per se. Whereas art is necessarily man-made, (or at the very least discovered and labeled), presence is produced by observing certain objects; it is not produced by the observation of artwork, necessarily.

### Burke and the Sublime

I would like to compare the nature of minimalism with Edmund Burke's description of the sublime published nearly 250 years ago in Part II of Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*.

The passion caused by the great and sublime in *nature*, when those causes operate most powerfully, in Astonishment; and Astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it. Hence arises the great power of the sublime, that far from being



produced by them, it anticipates our reasonings, and hurries us on by an irresistible force. Astonishment, as I have said, is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree; the inferior effects are admiration, reverence, and respect.<sup>24</sup>

This effect caused by the great in nature, which Burke calls Astonishment, I link closely to the effect which Fried and Greenberg have termed "presence". This is the thing which Greenberg describes as "aesthetically extraneous". He is correct: this presence does not enhance the work. It does not make it better art, but it is the core of the power in minimalist work. "Presence" is Burke's "sublime". What Fried and Greenberg overlook is that this presence has a strange, intrinsic power that though it may have nothing to do with aesthetic quality, is intrinsic to the forms themselves. Also, as we look at the effects of the sublime caused by Gestalt shapes, we see that large size, the artificial infinite, and lesser important attributes compound the sublime "Astonishment...admiration, reverence, and respect" we feel while viewing these pieces.

Another strong source for the sublime comes from the obscurity<sup>25</sup> of these works. Today, all people (most notably in the West) are innundated with art of many types, especially painting, sculpture, music and dance. We import art from far away cultures and carefully preserve art from past centuries. Even so, we have very little experience with dominating six foot cubes. Another facet of their obscurity is the undetermined interior aspect of these forms: An eerie feeling of presence develops when we contemplate what strange things could be inside such a cube.

Power<sup>26</sup> is also a source of the sublime, especially the risk of destructive power. A large, faceless, nameless, enigmatic, even "other worldly" form, due to its obscurity, certainly does not suggest a benign force. "Whenever strength is only useful, and employed for our benefit or our pleasure, then it is never sublime..."<sup>27</sup> There is no inherent use for these objects, they only sit there confronting us...waiting...

The strength of these works I would ascribe to *innate* power. That is, the force they have comes from them, not from the ability of the artist. The less they are associated with art or the artist, the more power they have. These forms are so basic that it is as though they have existed in nature long before the artist used them.

"Vastness", or "Greatness of dimension",<sup>28</sup> are attributed to the sublime as well, especially forms in the vertical position. In minimalist art we have no deep crevices to examine, but we do have pieces teetering on the brink of disaster, easily big enough to kill someone. For an example I submit Bladen's *The X*.<sup>29</sup> Note that this piece stands more than twenty-two feet high.

Next is infinity, or more specifically Succession and Uniformity.<sup>30</sup> In Donald Judd's pieces we see



*Succession*; which is requisite that the parts may be continued so long, and in such a direction, as by their frequent impulses on the sense to impress the imagination with an idea of their progress beyond their actual limits.<sup>31</sup>

In the perfect cube or sphere we also see uniformity. I can imagine being awe-struck by a seven-foot-high silver sphere: “That is *so round!*” This is the sensation of the sublime.

Difficulty is a source, Burke notes, and this also falls under the “That is so round!” (and therefore difficult to build) category. This is a category where minimalism falters simply because of its execution, not because of the nature of the objects.

Below I have listed some important issues that I have not addressed earlier that are important to the subject of minimalism, objecthood, and the sublime.

First, I have chosen my examples carefully. I have chosen the simplest, most gestalt minimalist works to discuss, and have ignored the more complex ones. Perhaps this is acceptable, since the more complex a work is, the farther it is from true minimalism.

As far as sublimity and color goes, black would be the sublime color of choice. It does not seem to be the case that more minimalist works are black, although I think that those that are black are more sublime because of it, e.g., *The X*. One reason for an insignificant increase in the percentage of black works might be that this would make black less obscure, and therefore less sublime.

Lastly, Donald Judd, in an interview with Robert Morris, says that his six-foot cube was designed not to be *too* big. For the sublime, size is an important factor. Why, if Judd were utilizing the sublime nature of things, did he not desire to make the object as big as he could? Perhaps the answer lies in the possibility that he was after a particular source of the “sublime” - that caused by shape alone. His aim was to give his work significance through shape rather than vast size.

## Conclusion

I believe that Fried’s commentary on minimalism provides strong evidence as to the true character of minimalist art. There are two major clues: first, Fried believes that minimalist works are not works of art, but objects. We should raise an eyebrow when the art world produces and presents “non-artwork” for public study and appreciation. We should ask ourselves, “If it is not art, then why are we asked to see it, review it, consider it as if it were art?” Second, Fried (quoting Greenberg) describes that there is an effect caused by the observation of these objects. This effect, which he calls “presence”, is limited to being a quality of objects which seem to share certain traits, three of which are a degree of obscurity, larger than human size, and a simple, one-shape design.

Not suprisingly, some clues as to the quality of minimalist artwork can be found in the artwork itself, if we keep these forms in mind as we study Burke’s descrip-



tion of the traits of those things which are sublime. For instance, size is an important factor, as is difficulty of creation (if the minimalist executed his idea well), obscurity, and succession. What becomes evident is that identical traits are being used to describe the necessary elements of work that imparts “presence” and objects that are “sublime”. The power of the minimalist’s work is not produced by their artistic genius, and certainly not by their execution of an idea, but in the sublime power of the gestalt shapes they use.



### Endnotes

1. Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting"(1960), p. 85.
2. Ibid., p. 86.
3. John Canady, *Mainstreams of Modern Art*, (1959), Opposite first color print, page (unnumbered).
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., next page, (unnumbered).
6. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood" (1967), p. 117.
7. Ibid.
8. This may not be the case, however, since Stella's later pieces seem to approach minimalism.
9. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood" (1967), p. 118.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p. 118.
12. Ibid., p. 119.
13. Ibid., p. 118.
14. Ibid., p. 119.
15. Gregory Battock, Ed., *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (1968), p. 283.
16. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood" (1967), pp. 120-123.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid., p. 123.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., p. 124.
22. Ibid., p. 125.
23. Gregory Battock, Ed., *Minimal Art*, p. 426.
24. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757), University of Notre Dame Press(1958), p. 57.
25. Ibid., p. 58.
26. Ibid., p. 64.
27. Ibid., p. 66.
28. Ibid., p. 72.
29. Gregory Battock, Ed., *Minimal Art*, p. 426.
30. Edmund Burke, *Enquiry*, p. 74.
31. Ibid.



## Antonin Artaud: Inspiration of Derrida

Elizabeth Nordt

Jacques Derrida, the 'father' of deconstruction, elicits strong reactions in his readers. Either they are adamantly in favor of his creative and innovative approach in dealing primarily with language, or fervently opposed to what they consider his unfounded dismantling of texts they hold sacred. Derrida's work varies greatly in its accessibility, ranging from early essays which are relatively straightforward academic pieces to recent more abstract works which may appear to be complete gibberish on the first reading. I propose that by looking at Derrida's former writings, particularly with reference to Antonin Artaud's life and work, we gain a new perspective and greater understanding for his more recent work.

The first section of *The Postcard: from Socrates to Freud and Beyond* (1980) entitled "Envois" is certainly among Derrida's most obscure work. They begin with these words: "You might read these envois as the preface to a book that I have not written."<sup>1</sup> The subject matter skips around, touching on a number of diverse topics, including love, communication, the picture of Plato and Socrates on the cover, and the book of Esther. It is dense, almost nonsensical, ungrammatical and many haven't the patience to weed through its countless references to make sense of it. The "Envois" can be discovered as an artistic rendering of Derrida's theories, one which contains many treasures for the dedicated observer to expose.

The "Envois" is simplest to decipher when referenced with Derrida's other work. Consider the "concept" of iterability introduced in "Signature Event Context" (1971) where Derrida is discussing Austin's theory of speech acts. Iterability is the capacity of a meaningful sign to be used in other contexts both serious and playful. Although a necessary condition for both writing and speech, iterability causes questions about the authenticity of a single linguistic act. Not only does intensive repetition render a word (spoken or written) powerless, but there is also the possibility of multiple meanings, both serious and non-serious. For a word to lose its iterability to avoid these dilemmas is also to make the transmission of its meaning impossible. Although accurate transfer of a specific meaning is the goal of linguistic acts, it is a goal which can never be reached. Yet its unattainability does not thwart its desirability and our quest for it.

This tragic view of language surfaces again and again in Derrida's "Envois". One example is "it is I who am speaking to you, uniquely, each time that I write 'you', it is that I am addressing myself authentically to you, with full and true



speech, presently.”<sup>2</sup> One primary issue Derrida deals with is the postal principle. This entails the title theme of the postcard. Derrida implies that the philosophical ramifications of mailing a letter are immense. Derrida tries to get us to understand the impossibility of ever receiving anything (everything ends in the dead letter office). He expands the impossibility from the postal system to all communication between people. His explanations of the failure of communication within the “Envois” remain obscure, although the postal service, delivery and addresses of letters are beautiful metaphors for the possibility (or failure) of communication. Pursuit of the impossible is shown in the following sample:

it begins with a destination without address, the direction cannot be situated in the end. There is no destination, my sweet destiny . . . The condition for it to arrive is that it ends up and even that it begins by not arriving.<sup>3</sup>

And further on:

I have more and more difficulty writing you. I now know what these letters are doomed to, but I’ve always known.<sup>4</sup>

Derrida’s “Envois” serves as a literary, and poetic culmination of his other writings, in addition to offering some new insights. Although the “Envois” is a confusing and enigmatic work when looked at for its philosophical contents, if read while keeping his earlier work in mind it becomes comprehensible. With this in mind we should look further back into Derrida’s early work. In doing so we come across two essays found in *Writing and Difference* that both address Antonin Artaud. Upon further examination it is clear that Artaud plays a large role in the “Envois”.

### Artaud and His Theatre

“Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) was not only an actor, a director, a writer, and an artist; he was also the father of a new brand of theatre known as ‘The Theatre of Cruelty.’”<sup>5</sup> To this list are also added visionary, mystic and madman. Although he was a major contributor to theatre theory, he was not a critic or an academic theorist. His dreams of a meaningful theatre resulted from his work in the theatre. Artaud spent his personal and intellectual life fighting this world in order to have what he could accept as an authentic existence. In his personal life, he spent time in various recovery programs for drug addiction and spent nine years of his later life confined in different mental institutions, diagnosed with a variety of mental illnesses.

Artaud was an artist. Although society allows those who create to have some of the eccentricities which this label often entails, Artaud broke the limits of what is acceptable under any circumstances. First treated for nervous disorders at the



age of nineteen, Artaud was never what society would call normal. He proceeded to enter the theatre world as an actor, soon adding cinema roles to his career. His primary work in the theatre was on stage, but he also spent some time directing and writing, both for the stage and about the theatre. In addition to being addicted to drugs, primarily heroin, Artaud was pronounced insane. In 1937, he was forcibly confined by French authorities and remained in asylums for nine years.

The relationship between his life as an artist and his sanity remains intriguing.

Artaud had said that he was searching for his soul through a cosmic experience, but he could not achieve this end permanently because he was always Antonin Artaud, a victim of his agonized body. To gain liberation from his body, he would have to destroy it.<sup>6</sup>

Artaud was his art. If Nietzsche is right that man creates himself, then when Artaud's vision of himself failed, he would have become empty, absent and mad.

Artaud worked in an age when realism prevailed in the theatre. Plays served primarily as glimpses into the lives of characters who are portrayed by actors whose skill was judged by their believability. Many of these plays were considered psychological dramas, an effect of Freud and psychoanalysis. The legacy of centuries of Western theatre's dependant relationship with texts as scripts still flourished. Artaud rebelled against all these constraints which, on his account, stifled the meaning and crushed the life out of the theatre.

Artaud sought to bring authentic meaning into the theatre. His conceptions of how this could be done were proposed in his *Theatre of Cruelty*. He envisioned this as a living theatre where a performance dominates its relation to a text, if a text is used at all. It would be a spectacle with no spectators, as the public would be a necessary and involved part of the production. Engaging the senses, emotions, and intellect, this would be a theatre for the total human. "Renouncing psychological man, with his well-dissected character and feelings, and social man, submissive to laws and misshapen by religions and precepts, the Theatre of Cruelty will address itself only to total man."<sup>7</sup>

Two fundamental features in the Western theatre which Artaud tried to destroy are representation and language. Representation is the essence of the vision of theatre Artaud denounces. The heritage of Aristotle's *Poetics*, where the aim of theatre is *mimesis*, imitation, must be rejected if theatre is to have meaning as an art. To represent life is not to live. The Theatre of Cruelty is alive and therefore must not include representation.

Language became the other primary obstacle for Artaud. The theatre of the text is swamped with words which, through their constant repetition, lose their meaning. Moreover theatre is a three-dimensional art, encompassing bodies in space which language does not exploit, makes traditional texts the enemy of a living



theatre. Hence, Artaud sought to create a new language of theatre which would utilize all the unique resources available to this art form. "Theatre will not be given its specific powers of action until it is given its language. . . . It is essential to put an end to the subjugation of the theatre to the text, and to recover the notion of a kind of unique language half-way between gesture and thought." <sup>8</sup>

In creating a language of meaning, Artaud faced the challenge of bringing the present into each performance. Authenticity disappears as it appears. The creative process must be manifest in each performance, in order for theatre to be an art. This is possible when theatre is not solely a public reading of a literary work, but a performance in which the text is only one part, allowing director, author and actor room to create. "The old duality between author and director will be dissolved, replaced by a sort of unique Creator upon whom will devolve the double responsibility of the spectacle and the plot." <sup>9</sup>

Artaud went on to layout his theatre specifically. He described where the public would sit and where the actors would perform, basic plots for performances, how the actors would interact with the public (because this theatre would be alive and participatory), etc. He accounted for the type of actors needed, those who are artists, creative thinkers who must involve themselves in the process of forming a theatrical piece for the public. He considered that rehearsal would still be necessary in this theatre, regardless of the desire to limit repetition to court authenticity.

Although he did stage his interpretation of *Les Cenci* within his framework for the Theatre of Cruelty, Artaud was aware that his theatre is essentially an impossible dream. But Artaud's vision did not die with him. Not only does his work influence Derrida, but it is the foundation for modern absurdist theatre.

### Artaud's Influence on Derrida

The literature on Artaud, most of it in French, is quite large. In my opinion, the single most brilliant critical analysis is in two essays by Jacques Derrida—'La Parole Soufflée' and 'Le Theatre de la Cruauté et la clôture de la Représentation' <sup>10</sup>

These essays, found in Derrida's *Writing and Difference* (1967), do a remarkable job of explicating Artaud's frustration with the theatre and his attempt at a solution. Derrida expands Artaud's work and blends it with his own into a complex, resigned lament as to the limitations and paradoxes of language and communication.

The theatre and the language of the stage epitomize the complications in the theories of speech acts. By its nature the theatre makes us question the authenticity of speech acts. It is an actor's purpose to make speech acts authentic on stage, while outside of their theatrical realm they are not fully meant, not completely



serious. Theatre itself cannot be serious if the speech on its stage is not serious. This is unfortunately too often the case, and lead Artaud to develop a theatre where this was guaranteed not to occur. In the Theatre of Cruelty this would not happen as speech acts, in whatever form they take, would be fully serious. This was Artaud's goal. His theatre still must deal with the idea of rehearsals, however, as they are a necessary part of the theatre. Here we find one flaw in Derrida's account of Artaud. "Artaud wanted to erase repetition in general. For him, repetition was evil."<sup>11</sup> Derrida does not allow Artaud to rehearse, as this is additional repetition. Artaud did not like the problems which repetition causes for meaning but he never intended to give up rehearsals. This is an expression of his impossible dream for a fully authentic theatre: without rehearsals, it could not be theatre, with rehearsals it could not be authentic. In Derrida's terms: "Plenitude is the end (the goal), but were it attained, it would be the end (death)."<sup>12</sup> The idea of pursuing the unattainable is the essence of a theatrical performance. In a dramatic scene each character must have a goal, a reason for being on stage. Without a goal there is no action, hence no meaning and no scene. If a character achieves its goal the scene must end quickly, or else die the painful death of having lost the audience's attention.

### Inspiration and the "Envois"

Themes which Derrida discusses in "La Parole Soufflée" in relation to Artaud are recurrent in Derrida's later writings. Artaud's influence on Derrida reaches much further than the two essays of which he is the focus, although he is named in only those two pieces. By reading the *Postcard* with reference to 'La Parole Soufflée', with the understanding that it is a less formal academic work, parts of it become quite intelligible. Passages such as "And I kill you at every moment, but I love you. And you can no longer doubt it, even if I destroy everything with the most amorous patience (as do you, moreover), beginning with myself."<sup>13</sup> are interpretable after reading the argument leading up to the conclusion: "Death is an articulated form of our relationship to the Other. I die only of the other: through him, for him, in him."<sup>14</sup> These relate to Derrida's elaboration on Artaud's proposition that the body's lack of unity with the mind, which begins at birth, results from its theft by the Other. The Other can also be called God. Artaud struggles with Being. Living as a unique and integrated being means becoming both himself and the other within him. The passage in the "Envois" shows the struggle with this duality: "the uniquely each time that I love: beyond everything that is, you are the one—and therefore the other."<sup>15</sup> "Promise me that one day there will be a world. And a body."<sup>16</sup> The theft, of everything, which Derrida continues to refer to in his essay can be seen here.

Although this connection may well be coincidental, Derrida's interest in Edgar Allen Poe might be attributed to Artaud. Derrida investigates Poe's "The Purloined Letter" in the "Envois". In his earlier essay on Artaud, Derrida plays with



the word purloined, using it to describe speech, the body, and the mind. Artaud, during his years on the stage as an actor, discovered and found solace in a kinship with a Poe character.

He declared he had found his prototype in the person of Poe's character, Mr. Usher. The similarities between these two men were frighteningly exact: almost although time had been abolished, and Poe had modeled his character on Artaud.<sup>17</sup>

### Dear Artaud, ?

As a postcard, the "Envois" is meant to be sent by an individual through the postal system and received by the addressee. This raises the question of both who the writer is and to whom the postcard is addressed. There are themes of love in many of the entries. We generally assume heterosexuality and Derrida is male, so the most common assumption is that the writer is Derrida and the addressee is a female lover. This is only an assumption however and there are reasons to doubt its accuracy. It is possible Derrida addresses some of his entries to Artaud.

Artaud wrote several essays which were compiled into the book *The Theatre and Its Double*, but the majority of what has been published as his writing consists of his letters, written throughout his life. The style and themes of many of Artaud's letters are such that they must be connected to Derrida's "Envois" in *The Postcard*. It could easily be concluded that at least parts of Derrida's postcard are indeed addressed to Artaud.

Artaud's letters which bear the most remarkable resemblance to the "Envois" are those from the years 1937-1948 (the year of his death). Nine of these eleven years Artaud spent confined to various mental institutions. Amidst his correspondence are letters which cover themes of love, burning, death, and the postal system along with such stylistic devices as ending mid-sentence, skipping a line and beginning a new topic. All of these motifs are prevalent in the "Envois". Here are two examples of Artaud's letters:

I feel you more than ever, I experience again the same quality of atmosphere, the same warmth, the same thoughts in the air as when we were together. It's been a year already. A year of complete, absolute love. It is beautiful. I am happy and it is because of you.

Until tomorrow. I hold you tight in my arms. I take you into me.

NAKY

notice how my handwriting resembles yours. <sup>18</sup>



I agree to go on living only because I think and believe that this World with which Life insults me and insults You will die before I do. . . .

To agree to burn as I have burned all my life and as I burn now is also to burn; and I know that I was predestined to burn. (Letter to André Breton, July 30, 1937) <sup>19</sup>

However, unlike similar passages in Derrida, Artaud's letters are as authentic as possible, meaning they were actually sent through the postal system. Derrida could remain authentic if indeed he is writing to someone without an address, a dead Artaud perhaps? Even if Artaud is not the addressee, (who must be absent anyway) he is definitely referred to and discussed by Derrida.

In 1969, Bettina L. Knapp's book *Antonin Artaud: A Man of Vision* was published, just a couple of years after Derrida's essays on Artaud. Knapp states: "In this volume, I have tried to trace Artaud's intellectual, philosophical, and psychological development through his own works, in order to understand the visions and perceptions of this man who lived ahead of his time."<sup>20</sup>

Derrida both refers to and addresses a "Bettina" in the "Envois".

and I have thought a lot about Bettina. Oh, she is not you but the situation is terrifying and must be spoken of without gynemagogy. The most innocent and most pained victim places you in the worst double bind: whatever initiative 'he' might take with her and her writing he was a priori guilty.<sup>21</sup>

It seems reasonable that this is indeed about Bettina Knapp and the 'he' referred to could well be Artaud.

Further on Derrida writes to Bettina.

Ah Bettina, my love  
and it will be even worse if I publish your letters under my name, signing in your place. Listen Bettina, do what you want, I will restore everything to you, j'accepte everything, from you I will receive my last breath. I have no right to the history that we have told each other <sup>22</sup>

This passage, involving publishing letters, personal histories, and breathing is undoubtedly concerning Artaud. "Souffle", translated in this passage as breath, along with several derivations meaning spirited, inspiration, and prompter are all discussed in Derrida's essay "La Parole Soufflee", which admits Artaud as its focus.

There are times when it seems that Artaud himself seems to be the addressee.

I know very well that you 'would like to write a book of the unique, and of



the absolutely unequivocal. Madness itself, don't you think? I even ask myself what this means.' Me too, but you are mad and I love madly that which makes you write this, and nothing else. <sup>23</sup>

Considering that *The Theatre and Its Double* was Artaud's attempt to write just such a "unique, unequivocal" book and the many levels of madness related to Artaud, this does seem to be a letter that quotes and is addressed to Artaud.

### Echoes of Artaud

It is curious that despite clear evidence of his presence, Artaud is not among the many, many other people who are referred to by name in the "Envois". Without mentioning his name, Derrida invokes his voice and engages Artaud's attitudes in the "Envois" as intensely as he does in "La Parole Souffle" and "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation".

Artaud may be equally present in the "Envois" as in the earlier essays, but he is certainly more camouflaged, as are all of Derrida's references and reflections. Derrida does not wish to be trapped with a specific 'philosophy', which would stifle any further inquiry and life itself.

Artaud is relevant and understandable, a cultural monument, as long as one mainly refers to his ideas without reading much of his work. For anyone who reads Artaud through, he remains fiercely out of reach, an unassimilable voice and presence. <sup>24</sup>

Although not as extreme since he remains within the limits of what is seen as sanity, this description can easily be applied in reference to Derrida.

Although we can only guess the extent of Artaud's effect on Derrida, it is clear that he is present in *The Postcard*, in addition to Derrida's earlier essays. Undoubtedly, bearing the work of Artaud in mind when investigating the "Envois" brings greater understanding to the work.



## Endnotes

1. Derrida, Jacques, *The Postcard: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987) p. 3.
2. Derrida, *The Postcard*, p. 136.
3. Derrida, *The Postcard*, p. 29.
4. Derrida, *The Postcard*, p. 200.
5. Knapp, Bettina. *Antonin Artaud: Man of Vision*. (New York, David Lewis, 1969, p. xiii.
6. Derrida, *The Postcard*, p. 192.
7. Artaud, Antonin. *The Theatre and Its Double*, (New York, Grove Weidenfeld, 1958) p. 123.
8. Artaud, *Theatre and Its Double*, p. 89.
9. Ibid., p. 94.
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11. Derrida, Jacques, *Writing and Difference*, (Chicago, University of Chicago, 1978) p. 245.
12. Derrida, Jacques *Limited Inc*, (Evanston, IL, Northwestern University Press, 1988) p. 129.
13. Derrida, *The Postcard*, p. 112.
14. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 180.
15. Derrida, *The Postcard*, p. 143.
16. Ibid., p. 122.
17. Knapp, p. 65.
18. Artaud, Antonin. *Selected Writings*, (New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976) p. 21.
19. Ibid., p. 400-401.
20. Artaud, *Selected Writings*, p. xiii.
21. Derrida, *The Postcard*, p. 201.
22. Derrida, *The Postcard*, p. 231.
23. Derrida, *The Postcard*, p. 141.
24. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. lix.



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## Kesey and Queffélec: A French Adaptation of *Cuckoo's Nest*

Marc Lawson

Embarking on the endless literary journey is an invigorating venture. On this journey we discover innumerable ideas that tie our world and minds together, leading us to ever higher levels of understanding and meaning. Sharing themes across cultures is an exciting literary tradition, and studying a foreign literary work often sheds new light on an already familiar text. In this new light, readers are inspired to focus on a different perspective of an established theme. Such is the case with Yann Queffélec's French novel *Les noces barbares* which, translated literally, means "The Barbarous (Cruel) Marriage." Many themes from this 1985 novel seem to parallel those of Ken Kesey's first novel *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, published in 1962. It is my goal to show that *Noces* is a cross-cultural rewriting of *Cuckoo* with the twist of a darker conclusion. Queffélec's inspired literary work confirms that the tradition of shared themes across cultures continues to be a powerful one.

### The Overpowering Maternal Figure

*Noces* begins with the explicit rape scene of Nicole, a thirteen-year-old with the appearance of a sexually ripe young woman of eighteen. As is not unusual at such an age, she sexually manifests her independence from her parents by dating Will, a cowboyish American military pilot. We sense, through Queffélec's words, that she is familiar with the seductive power of female sexuality. What she doesn't foresee is Will's perverted sense of entertainment, namely a drunken bash with two of his male friends, and Nicole as the sexual object of all three men. She becomes pregnant from the rape and bears Ludo, a son.

In *Noces*, Ludo is the main character who is tainted by his family's memory of his father. Throughout his childhood, as he spends most of his time in his room, the attic, Ludo is continually told that he has a psychological problem. His mother becomes the main catalyst of this feeling that he is disturbed, for she is haunted by the memory of the rape. She cannot separate her son's existence from that of her rapist, and wrongly likens Ludo's character to that of Will. In her actions she reinforces Ludo's lack of self-confidence, which ultimately perpetuates his invertedness. As Freudian theory tells us, "One of the clearest indications that a child will later become neurotic is to be seen in an insatiable demand for his parents' affection" (Young-Bruehl 139). Thus, she overpowers his natural human spirit by depriving him of love and the chance to grow.



Later in the novel, she decides to send him to the Centre Saint-Paul for disturbed children. There, Nurse Rackoff (a name surprisingly similar to Nurse Ratched in *Cuckoo*) becomes a replication of his mother's power to subdue the human spirit. She is a controlling woman who ironically seems to the outside world to be a caring one. Rackoff has her own problems including the memory of an old military boyfriend. In one scene she is in the cellar and dresses in a uniform wearing a mustache when Ludo finds her. She tells him that she has now become his mother since his mother doesn't really love him anyway. As much as Ludo wants to deny this, the lack of a visit by his mother for the several months that he is at the Centre only substantiates Rackoff's claim. He realizes that his stay at the Centre is therefore indefinite, and that he must live with yet another overpowering mother or escape in search of autonomy.

This theme seems to carry directly from *Cuckoo* and the dominant maternal figures therein. Billy Bibbitt's mother insists on treating him like a boy though he is 31 years old. He is thus deprived of the chance to "grow up" and become a man and function normally in society. Because of his lack of "functioning" in society he too is considered to be psychologically disturbed. This is why we find him in the psychological ward. Even there, however, he is still not allowed to escape his mother's power since not only does she work in the same hospital, but she is also good friends with Nurse Ratched. The Big Nurse, then, becomes a duplicate predominating maternal figure for Billy.

Chief Broom, in *Cuckoo*, also suffers from such a mother. His is a white woman who married his Native American father. She is responsible for the downfall of the Indian nation that holds the Chief's entire heritage by making capitalistic westernized deals with white men to take over the reservation and build a dam there. The river on which the reservation is built is the "life-giver" to the Indian nation for it provides their food and constitutes the core of their culture. When the Indian nation is stripped of this core, it falls. Not even Chief Broom's father can overcome the western threat, so he becomes a drunkard and an outcast in an effort to alleviate the pain of this loss. Chief Broom himself introverts and pretends to be deaf and mute, for the western man, as history tells us, decides not to listen to anything the Indian or the nation has to say.

In fact it is all the patients in the ward in *Cuckoo* who suffer from the predominance of Nurse Ratched. "Nurse Ratched is frequently referred to, in varying degrees of admiration or irony...by the inmates themselves as the 'mother' of the men on her ward. As Kesey presents it, the role is an evil one" (Leeds 21). She deprives them of the essential needs of human beings to function in society by creating a sterile environment in which they must live. "Big Nurse (Ratched), under the guise of compassion, perpetuates, through the role of solicitous mother the debilitating environment which already has emasculated the inmates" (Leeds 21). This group of patients is personified by the single character of Ludo in *Noces* who suffers the same deprivation of the development of the human spirit. They



all seem to be caught in a judgmental, cold and unnurturing world.

### The Fault of Societal "Norms"

As we know from strictly empirical knowledge, there exist what are called societal "norms." These norms are meant to describe the majority of the members of a society, and tend to classify the remaining individuals as outcasts or "the psychologically disturbed." These assumptions about the nature of people are sometimes erroneous. We are often too quick to judge others and fail to distinguish between individualism and illness. In both novels, characters are described by others around them as being "disturbed," when the root of the problem is actually caused by an infectious relationship with an overpowering maternal figure.

Ludo obviously suffers from an uncaring mother. She is selfish and fails ever to consider him as an individual separate from his father's character. As she and her family incessantly tell him that he is not normal, they are in effect creating his being. He really has no choice but to believe them since the suggestion is at the forefront of his psyche. Even Nurse Rackoff chooses not to help him build a self-confident personal identity. So she, in effect, accepts his "disturbance" as innate and not as a product of suggestion.

The deprivation of any nurturing of self-confidence or a connection to the individual soul is a main theme vis-à-vis the patients in *Cuckoo*. Oppressed by the dominant maternal figures, they are culturally forced to become a part of the ward in search of some nourishment or education that will render them capable of being "normal." The astounding fact that most of the patients are in the ward voluntarily substantiates their culturalization of believing they are not normal and cannot overcome society's oppression by themselves.

In both works we are witness to the negativity of social norms. In *Cuckoo* these norms are directly related to the white man's westernized world. The "Combine" of society, as Chief Broom describes it, is the catalyst of the loss of human spirit and the individual. By establishing norms we deprive people of self-sustenance.

To accept others' perceptions of our being as truth strips us of our human spirit's need for self-identity. Life becomes meaningless if we accept that our existence is merely a transient tool for society's "progress." Reinforcement that our being is worthless to this progress may lead to the tragic acceptance that our being has no other purpose. We may decide that our only options are to exist sitting in the corner, or to die for lack of hope of sometime being "useful" or "normal." It is the fault of these societal norms that these characters find themselves lacking confidence and out of touch with the life-giving human spirit.

### The Freudian Bridge

On yet another level, the cultural and linguistic gap between the two novels is bridged by common occurrences of Freudian thought. The crux of much of Freud's work is in the relationships between the sexes. As we have already established,



there are strong themes linking the male characters of both novels to dominating maternal figures. These female characters in effect emasculate the males of their power as human beings. This concept is strongly related to Freud's theory of "penis envy." I prefer to use the idea that Elizabeth McMahan quotes of Ann Nietzsche that:

contrary to popular belief, women do not want to castrate men; it's just that we are tired of being eunuchs ourselves. This does not mean that women want penises but that we want the powers, freedoms, and dignities that are automatically granted to the people who happen to have them. (Searles 148)

Nicole in *Noces* experienced this male dominance when she was raped by Will and his friends. Since she felt the sharpness of this male power, she takes it upon herself to avoid being abused again by depriving Ludo of his right to be an individual. Stripping his self-identity in turn strips him of his human spirit and symbolically his masculinity. Moreover, Nurse Rackoff uses a whistle to command the behavior of the children in the Centre, rendering them subject to rules. The use of this whistle is translated as being a "cutting sound" which, taken at a higher level, symbolizes the emasculation of human liberties. In the cellar scene described above she carries a sword, a weapon that enforces the constant symbolization of emasculation.

The same theme seems to carry over from *Cuckoo* as all of these patients suffer from females. Throughout the novel, Nurse Ratched tries to hide her breasts under her heavily starched uniform. Her desire is to maintain the sentiment among the patients of the ward that she is an authority figure, a characteristic traditionally masculine. "The problems of many of the men on the ward are largely sexual in origin, and in a number of cases an overbearing mother has contributed largely to the problem" (Leeds 21). Critics like Maxwell describe her as an "asexual woman" with "an iron hand" (Searles 135). The patients are methodically given narcotic drugs to regulate their behavior. These drugs are an obvious symbol of the controlled robbing of the males of any power they have. They are meant to suppress the spirit of the men which is, in effect, an emasculation.

Moreover, the Freudian theory of seeking vengeance against one's deflowerer carries through both works. Nicole sees the image of Will in her son and therefore considers power over Ludo as power over her rapist. When finally McMurphy attacks Nurse Ratched in *Cuckoo*, he exposes her breasts by ripping open her uniform. By doing so he shows to the patients of the ward "that she is no invincible machine but simply a woman, a human being with all the attendant human vulnerability and fallibility" (Leeds 37). Deflowered as such, she sends McMurphy to be lobotomized for revenge. Freud equates decapitation and castration through the example of the tragedy *Judith and Holofernes*:



After she has been deflowered by this powerful man, who boasts of his strength and ruthlessness, she finds strength in her fury to strike off his head, and thus becomes the liberator of her people. Beheading is well-known to us as a symbolic substitute for castrating. (Young-Bruehl 212)

This cutting away of that part of the brain which constitutes our power of individuality is a symbolic "matriarchal emasculation" of McMurphy, who was driven to act against the "mechanistic order" of the Combine, that had been oppressing him and the other patients for so long (Leeds 21).

### The Revolution of the Human Spirit

Driven by the social oppression that we have noted, the characters of both novels revolt. It is in the product of these revolutions where the two works diverge. Ludo's first revolt is against Nurse Rackoff. By burning down the barn where sheep are kept he shatters the false image of her as a nurturing woman. She had described the children as sheep of God, but more symbolically we see that they were sheep following the norms of society. He escapes to an ocean coast and decides to live alone on a wrecked boat. When at the end of the novel his mother comes to the boat to send him back to the Centre, he strangles the woman who had deprived him of love for his whole life. If the book had ended here we might be able to say that he had overcome the oppression. Instead, he jumps into the ocean with his mother's corpse and proceeds to swim out to sea with her in his arms. In a way, he is trying to save the mother he wanted to love, but in doing so he swims to his death, unable to live with himself and that which he has been forced to become.

Contrary to such a tragic ending, *Cuckoo* ends on a more Americanized victorious note. The lobotomized McMurphy is regarded by Chief Broom as a virtual death of a true individual. Out of respect and sympathy, he smothers McMurphy. After tearing from the floor the control panel which symbolized the "Combine's" restraining system, he throws it through a window of the ward. He escapes, running off into the early morning, saving himself but also carrying with him the spirit of McMurphy. The other patients of the ward have also grown from their experience with McMurphy and it is supposed that they too have begun to find the courage and will to leave the ward in search of new lives.

It seems apparent that Queffélec had some form of exposure to Kesey's *Cuckoo*, whether in novel or cinematic form. We know that when an author sends her words out into the world she intends to share meaning through the development of characterizations, themes and plots. As I have shown, these novels share many examples of all three elements. The diverging conclusions of these two texts are understood as individuals' varying interpretations of meaning. If it is true that Queffélec was influenced by Kesey, then it is inspiring to consider that such a modern American novel has not only had an impact in its own culture, but in another as well.



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(continued)



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